

Transport Committee

Oral evidence: Reforming public transport after the pandemic, HC 676

Wednesday 10 March 2021

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[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Huw Merriman (Chair); Mr Ben Bradshaw; Ruth Cadbury; Lilian Greenwood; Simon Jupp; Robert Langan; Chris Loder; Karl McCartney; Grahame Morris; Gavin Newlands; Greg Smith.

Questions 225 - 311

Witnesses

I: Nicholas Lyes, Head of Roads Policy, RAC Motoring Services; Mary Creagh, Chief Executive, Living Streets; Roger Geffen, Policy Director, Cycling UK; and Martin McTague, National Vice Chair, Federation of Small Businesses.

II: Chris Boardman, Cycling and Walking Commissioner, Greater Manchester; Mark Valleley, Technical Lead, Transport for the South East; and Dr William Oliver Norman, Cycling and Walking Commissioner, Transport for London.

Written evidence from witnesses:

- RAC Motoring Services ([REF0007](#))
- Living Streets ([REF0064](#))
- Transport for London ([REF0090](#))



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Nicholas Lyes, Mary Creagh, Roger Geffen and Martin McTague.

Q225 **Chair:** This is the Transport Select Committee's fourth evidence session in our inquiry, reforming public transport after the pandemic. Today we will be focusing on active travel and local roads.

We have two separate panels. We have four witnesses on our first panel, and I ask them each to introduce themselves.

Mary Creagh: My name is Mary Creagh. I am the chief executive of Living Streets, the UK charity for everyday walking.

Martin McTague: I am Martin McTague. I am the chair of policy and advocacy at the Federation of Small Businesses.

Roger Geffen: I am Roger Geffen, policy director at Cycling UK, the national UK cycling charity.

Nicholas Lyes: I am Nicholas Lyes. I am head of roads policy at the RAC.

Chair: Good morning to you all. We are all over the active travel space, which means I might have to ask if anyone has any declarations they wish to make.

Grahame Morris: For the record, I declare that I know two of the witnesses. Mary Creagh is a distinguished former Labour MP I served with for a number of years on various all-party groups. Martin McTague is an old friend of mine. I have had many contacts with him in his work with the Federation of Small Businesses.

Chair: Many of us know Mary from her time in the House.

Ruth Cadbury: I worked with Mary when she was an MP. As co-chair of the all-party parliamentary group for cycling and walking for the last five and a half years, I have worked quite closely with Roger Geffen, Chris Boardman and Will Norman. I have also worked with Will Norman on a project in my constituency.

Lilian Greenwood: In the interests of transparency, Mary and I worked very closely together, including as members of Labour's shadow Transport team back in 2013-14. Happy memories.

Mr Bradshaw: I know, love and miss Mary Creagh as well, of course. I am a former chair of the all-party parliamentary cycling group and its current patron.

Q226 **Chair:** Witnesses, that does not mean that we are going to give you an easy ride, but it is good that you are known to some of us already.

To start off, I want to ask you about your thoughts with regards to what is viewed as a car-led recovery. The car seems to have recovered very shortly after the first lockdown in terms of its usage.



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Transport for London has warned us that there is a danger, as the economy reopens, that we “replace one public health crisis with another— one fuelled by toxic air pollution, with gridlock.” Do you agree with that? Do you think it is a short-term issue and perhaps one that we should bear with, given that the economy needs to recover?

Mary Creagh: Thank you, Chair, and thanks to former colleagues for those warm words. As a former Select Committee Chair, I feel I am in the situation of poacher turned gamekeeper, or gamekeeper turned poacher; I am not quite sure which.

It is imperative that our country avoids a car-led recovery. That is not just because of the direct problems associated with car use, the 1,700 people who were killed on the nation’s roads in 2019, the 26,000 people who were seriously injured or the effects of air pollution contributing to over 30,000 indirect deaths each year, but because of the imperatives to decarbonise the economy. Those imperatives were set out in the sixth carbon budget, the road to net zero report, by the Committee on Climate Change just before Christmas. It is absolutely clear that we have to reduce car use.

As you have no doubt heard, car use in some areas is back to pre-pandemic levels. That was certainly the evidence from the last lockdown. It is imperative that we avoid it for the indirect and direct issues associated with car use.

Martin McTague: When asked about this, 93% of small businesses say that the car is absolutely vital for their business. The initial surge in car usage was mainly driven by safety concerns about public transport. It is important that we do not overreact to what is currently going on. I think that will change in the next few months.

We believe there is a need for longer-term reform. One of the things we think will change the way car use happens in the UK is introducing road charging.

Q227 **Chair:** Thank you, Martin. That is the subject of an inquiry to come on this Committee. Roger Geffen.

Roger Geffen: The Covid crisis has been an horrendous experience, but we need to see it as an opportunity to recover from the crisis in a way that also tackles the crises of congestion, air pollution, road casualties and of course climate change and physical inactivity. Those were all crises that were there all along.

During the pandemic, one of the silver linings was how, when the roads were quiet and free of danger, parents were able to get out with their children and enjoy clean air and birdsong. That gave us a glimpse of the different world that is now possible and is one of the silver linings of the very dark experiences of Covid.



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Congestion has been estimated to cost £30 billion a year; deaths from air pollution £20 billion; road casualties £35 billion; and physical inactivity £7.4 billion annually. Those are huge sums. We need to take the opportunity to recover from the Covid crisis in a way that also deals with all those other crises.

To give them their due, the Government took some steps to draw on cycling to help with that recovery. They moved quite slowly to do so. We would have loved to see some of the pop-up cycle lanes that started to appear late last summer and early autumn. If only they had managed to get some of the money out to local authorities to spend earlier in the lockdown, I think we would have seen a lot more key workers able to take advantage of it, and indeed parents taking advantage of it. That would have given a powerful glimpse of a different future.

None the less, many of those schemes are out there and we need to build on them where they have worked well. Not all of them worked well, and I am sure we will come back to that point, but many of them have worked well. We now need to build on that change and entrench it as far as we possibly can.

Q228 **Chair:** Thank you, Roger. Finally on this, Nicholas Lyes.

Nicholas Lyes: When you look at the evidence from the first lockdown, when traffic volumes fell to around 30% of normal, and then come August, which you could say was when the restrictions were at their loosest last year, traffic volumes jumped up to around 91% or 92% of normal, it contrasts quite sharply with the recovery on public transport, for example, where figures were still very depressed.

In terms of how it looks as we go forward, from a long-term perspective I think it is very difficult to predict. What you will find is that, initially, when the country opens up, car use will probably be greater than normal. Part of that will be pent-up aggression—sorry, pent-up demand, not pent-up aggression. People will want to get in their cars and see their families and take staycations. Over the summer, the roads could be very busy. I suspect what might happen then is that a different trend will set in, which depends on what happens with things like employers allowing staff to work from home. We might see differences in peak-time traffic, for example.

It is quite difficult to predict. Obviously, there is a risk that car traffic volumes will increase substantially, at least initially, but beyond that these are certainly interesting times.

Q229 **Chair:** Perhaps I might come back to a couple of you to pick up on some points that you raised. Martin, you talked about safety and public transport, and perhaps that being a reason why your members were driving more. Evidence we have received shows that public transport is still safer than car usage because you are very unlikely to get Covid on public transport.



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We heard from a transport lead in Singapore. They deliberately did not say that public transport was not safe because they did not believe that people would then return to it. Do you think the Government have caused a problem on public transport with perception?

Martin McTague: I think it is a perception problem, yes. I travelled down to London a couple of weeks ago. I was one of four people in a carriage that normally would have been full. I do not think there is a real risk, but the perception of most people I speak to—certainly in our organisation—is that it is a risky way of travelling, and they much prefer to travel in a car. I do not think that is a permanent change. I think it will change again, but it is certainly a perception at the moment.

Q230 **Chair:** Mary, with the return almost to normality of the car, and with some schemes in place to encourage walking and cycling, we seem to have created more congestion, particularly in urban parts, hence the concern about air pollution. We have heard from colleagues in this place who drive out of London to their constituencies. They have mentioned a part of Swiss Cottage. Their point is that it cannot be great for air pollution and, also, because people are having to stay in more, the people in flats near those roads are getting the rough end of the wedge when it comes to that extent. Do you think that some of the measures have actually made things worse from an air pollution perspective?

Mary Creagh: No, Chair, I do not. The evidence is that there is always a bedding-in effect, and that local councillors and local MPs need to hold their nerve and make sure that feedback from residents is heard in the consultation.

What we know is that we have had traffic-calming measures and road filters being put in for the last 30 years. Where they have been put in, where they have been embedded and where there has been proper feedback, the evidence is that not a single resident would want them taken out. That is because they can see the benefits from reduced noise, the ability of their children to play out in the street, and the fact that it becomes a place where local businesses can put their chairs and tables out on the pavement to create space for different economic activity.

What we are seeing, however—it was interesting to hear pent-up aggression—is some evidence in London that the risk to pedestrians is rising. We see the risk of casualty going up as people get back in their cars and feel that they have to make up for the time and economic activity lost during lockdown.

We think it is imperative that Ministers now change their messaging to reinstall confidence in public transport, and say loudly and clearly that it is safe to use, and to invest in schemes like our walk-to-school scheme. That basically helps parents and children walk the very short journey to school. We know that one in four cars in the morning rush hour is taking a child to school. If we can remove them from the road, it creates more space for vehicles on commercial activity.



Chair: Thank you, Mary, No doubt there are things we are going to return to. We will stay on traffic and congestion, and perhaps I can bring in a couple of colleagues. First of all, Greg Smith.

Q231 **Greg Smith:** Good morning to the witnesses. Can I frame a question this way? Debate is seemingly becoming very polarised between those who wish to portray cars as bad and the other side who want to be very pro-motorist.

Given that it is a lot more complex than that, would you give your thoughts and views on how we find a better balance between supporting people who, rightly, need to use their vehicles because their business relies upon it, or because, bluntly, trying to do the family shop with a baby, a toddler and 12 bags of shopping is just not doable on the back of a bike? How do we find the better balance, so that there is not a narrative that emerges that alienates those who, for very legitimate reasons, need and use their cars, particularly in rural communities?

I get the idea that in a very dense urban area like London, Manchester or Birmingham it is easier to go for active travel, but in a constituency like mine—335 square miles of rural north Buckinghamshire—if the car is taken away people cannot function for the school run, shopping or whatever it might be. Where does the balance lie in this, starting with Mary?

Mary Creagh: Thank you for that question. There is no doubt that some of the emergency active travel schemes that were put in under legislation, and encouraged by Government, to create pop-up pavements and pop-up cycle lanes, gave people the impression that things were being done to them rather than with them. It is always better to include people in the design up front, and for the council and decision makers to be clear about the benefits that they are trying to achieve for people.

Of course, in rural neighbourhoods, there is a particular challenge. What does an inclusive village or town look like if every child and every older person has to be driven everywhere? How do we create truly inclusive rural communities where the voices of children under 17, those who cannot drive, those who are blind, partially sighted or wheelchair users who are unable to drive, or people who simply cannot afford a car are heard? Where are their voices heard?

It is very unfortunate that some of these projects have become a lightning rod and the frontline in the culture wars. That is deeply problematic because I think people solve problems better when they come together and co-design the solutions, talking about the sort of place that people want to live in and designing it around human activity rather than car activity, and prioritising people in those designs rather than prioritising motor vehicles, so that you nudge people to leave the car behind and to walk and cycle very short journeys; 80% of journeys under a mile are already walked or cycled. We need to try to nudge that up so that it includes more of the journeys under three miles, and really start creating 15-minute neighbourhoods in small towns and villages, where



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people can support their local high street, as they have done in vast numbers during the lockdowns.

Q232 Greg Smith: I appreciate your answer, but let me challenge you a little bit. There are many villages in my constituency where it is at least a 15 to 20-minute drive to the nearest big supermarket, for example. Most people still tend to prefer to do one big weekly shop rather than a daily-what-they-need shop. A lot of villages do not have a primary school, and certainly very few villages have a secondary school. Those journeys are over the one-mile or even the three-mile marker that you put down. Surely the answer has to be not to try to paint people who still choose to use their car out of practical necessity as somehow doing wrong, but to focus on the practicalities of rural environments where schools are not within a mile or three miles.

Mary Creagh: That is right. Of course, it is obviously much more efficient to put 50 children on a school bus than it is for 50 cars to drive to a school. The private car is the least efficient way of getting people from A to B, and it takes up space; 96% of cars are not in use most of the time. They are only active 4% of the time. It is an inefficient use of the space outside our houses and an inefficient use of our road networks.

We have lost thousands of bus routes in rural communities like yours. The answer is for the buses, the hospitals and the schools to put in those routes, not for 50, 100 or 300 parents to drive their children to secondary school. That is a recipe for gridlock, air pollution, a lack of child safety and missing our carbon budgets.

Roger Geffen: I agree with what you were saying about needing to unpolarise the debate. Some of the presentation is particularly a media thing. They just want to divide it into an absolutely polarised debate.

Around 90% of Cycling UK members also drive or have driving licences. In that sense, if the idea is that it is all about some kind of war on the motorist, when many adult cyclists are also motorists, we are at war with ourselves if that is going on.

It is not about being anti-car. It is about saying that none of us wants too much traffic. That is very different. Everybody who drives and who needs to drive in the way you described—people who really need to drive—would benefit from everybody who does not absolutely need to drive having better options. That could be more local shops and other local services in their areas. Hopefully, we will have an opportunity to touch on the role of planning policy in helping to make sure that people have services close to their homes.

There should be better sustainable transport options. That includes rural areas. It is not just the rural bus; it is about making e-bikes and electrically assisted pedal cycles more readily available for slightly longer rural journeys that people would otherwise drive. People can take up the



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use of e-bikes. When you discover the benefits of an e-bike, it can enable you to make a lot more journeys.

It is not an absolute: once you take up cycling, you have to give up driving. It is simply not that polarised. It is about giving more people more options. It is certainly not about demonising people when they drive for some journeys. It is about more choice. It is about transport policy rather than demonising individuals. I think you are absolutely right that we need to take that kind of stigma out of it.

Q233 Greg Smith: Martin, from a business perspective, we have seen lots of small businesses switch to home delivery models and so on throughout the pandemic, which is likely to continue. How important is the motor vehicle to small businesses? With that in mind, was the Chancellor right to freeze fuel duty in the Budget last week?

Martin McTague: I think you are right to characterise it as a polarised debate. I think it is more about making a transition from most businesses feeling they have absolutely no choice at the moment other than to use the car to one where they have more choices. We did not support an increase in fuel duty for the very reason that many people do not have much of a choice. In rural constituencies, a lot of the businesses we talk to say that 70% of their activity can only happen by car and van, so they are completely constrained about the options they have.

We believe that if there is a realistic ambition for more low-carbon solutions, and many of our members and businesses generally agree with that transition, there are definitely ways we can get there. What you do not do is demonise or penalise people who have little, or no, choice about how to run their business.

Q234 Greg Smith: Nick, a final word on this point from you.

Nicholas Lyes: I have a certain degree of sympathy with what has been said. When we have done our research on this, the evidence suggests that people attach more importance to having access to a motor vehicle through the pandemic for the precise reason that they see it as a safe and practical way to get around. If you are being encouraged to do your essential shopping only once a week, you need to buy a week's worth of groceries, and that usually requires a car.

People are much more dependent on their vehicles than 10 years ago. That has shown through in our research. Primarily, it is because they see the motor vehicle, taking the pandemic out of it altogether, as the most direct and practical way for them to get around and do their business.

I echo some of the comments that have been made by the other panellists. We have to take some of the sting out of the debate. There is a narrative that some people like to play, where you play off car drivers against cyclists and things like that. I do not think that is helpful. A fifth of our members say that they cycle regularly. As Roger said, a number of cyclists are car drivers as well.



If we look carefully at what planners need to do, first of all they need to understand that people need their vehicles. I do not think that is going to change. People will continue to use their motor vehicles for the precise reasons that we saw from our research. Perhaps we have to look at the way we encourage people to think about alternative journeys. If you are just nipping down the road for a pint of milk, for example, and it is a mile or maybe a two-mile walk, perhaps we should be encouraging people to question whether or not they need to take their motor vehicle for that.

We know from the data that a quarter of all car journeys are about two miles and under. There needs to be a slight shift in terms of rethink, but I strongly encourage people in all policy circles to understand that the car is not going to go anywhere. People are dependent on it, and we will continue to have people using their vehicles for all sorts of purposes.

Chair: Finally, on this subject, Chris Loder wants to come in.

Q235 **Chris Loder:** I want to briefly ask the panellists about the low traffic neighbourhoods. Specifically, given the fairly anecdotal evidence so far, especially from cyclists, pollution for them is increasing as a result of them. Do the panellists have a view as to whether or not, coming out of Covid, we are in effect replacing one public health crisis with another when it comes to the low traffic neighbourhoods we are seeing in London and other places?

Mary Creagh: There is an issue around air pollution, but there is also an epidemic of obesity in our country. We know that sitting is the new smoking, and that 100,000 people died last year because they were not out walking or active. We know that walking is the most accessible means of active travel. It is what we were built to do.

Q236 **Chris Loder:** I am sorry to interrupt, but I am specifically asking about the programme in London that is basically reducing dual carriage roads to single carriage roads and those single carriageways in each direction being reduced to one-way streets. In effect, it means that those who are cycling have to cycle through much more traffic congestion than they may have done previously. I am specifically wondering whether you think that programme, and other programmes like it across the country, is causing a health crisis in itself?

Mary Creagh: No, I do not. What the programmes show, not just in London but in the programme of school street closures across the country that local authorities are very keen to roll out, is that they are creating space for people to travel, to walk, to cycle, to scoot and to skate on their smaller local journeys and getting those people out. All the evidence is that the activity benefits far outweigh any negative effects from air pollution.

What we are doing is essentially retrofitting cities. London, in some cases, was built in Victorian times and medieval times. There are very small streets that were never intended for motor vehicles but have had motor vehicles down them. The programme of street closures is enabling



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more people to get out. The road closures in the City and Soho are enabling small businesses and restaurants to provide services in a socially distanced and safe way to their customers. That has been the difference between success and failure.

Q237 **Chris Loder:** Thank you, Mary. Nick, can I ask you next?

Nicholas Lyes: I have no evidence to suggest that low-traffic neighbourhoods have increased pollution across the different parts of the country where they have been implemented. The only thing I can go on is from the view of what drivers are telling us. There are drivers saying that they do not like these schemes, and they believe they have increased congestion in their local area. I suspect that might be the case with some of the schemes.

Q238 **Chris Loder:** Is the RAC looking at doing anything specifically to understand that, as to whether or not that is factual?

Nicholas Lyes: At the moment, we are not looking at it. What we have is the evidence from what drivers have told us. As far as I can tell you today, the research we have done suggests that drivers are quite divided, even among themselves, on the idea of low-traffic neighbourhoods. A proportion of them say that they have seen more people cycling and walking and that it has encouraged that. They want to keep some of these schemes. A large proportion also—

Q239 **Chris Loder:** I beg your pardon, but we need to keep going. I am watching the clock and we have a lot to do. I will very quickly go to Roger and then Martin for a short contribution. I beg your pardon for interrupting you.

Roger Geffen: Part of the problem is that a lot of what we are hearing is anecdotal evidence. I have seen no monitoring evidence that suggests that they are causing air pollution problems. That does not enable me to say that there are no schemes that have caused air pollution problems. The Government view, and this is probably correct—

Q240 **Chris Loder:** Are you talking specifically about London or somewhere else? From what I have seen, the queues in London at certain times of the day are much worse than they were before.

Roger Geffen: Yes, there has been a horrendous rebound. The rebound in traffic that Nick Lyes was talking about earlier has been particularly marked in London because London is a very public transport-dependent city. I have seen no evidence that that is to do with the low-traffic neighbourhoods. Where low-traffic neighbourhoods have been taken out, the queues are still there. It is not that they are to do with the low-traffic neighbourhoods. The evidence that it is to do with the low-traffic neighbourhoods is purely anecdotal and has generally not been substantiated by any evidence that I have seen. That is the Government's view too; it is more anecdotal than genuine evidence.



Q241 **Chris Loder:** Is there any evidence, Roger, that you know of, to back that up, or is it purely an anecdotal debate at the moment?

Roger Geffen: I have seen evidence from individual schemes. Indeed, we brought a legal challenge to the removal of one of the pop-up cycle lanes in West Sussex, which was taken out on the basis of anecdotal evidence despite the fact that the monitoring evidence the council had taken showed that the claims that it had increased congestion, pollution and so on were not true. Because there were some vocal voices in the local area, the lead councillor took it out, despite being opposed by some of his fellow councillors in West Sussex. A lot of this is anecdotal, and not things that are actually happening. This is one of those things where we need to take a more measured view of the debate and not rush to conclusions based on anecdotal evidence.

Q242 **Chris Loder:** Martin, do you have anything you would like to add?

Martin McTague: Only that any of the debates I have ever heard about this seem to have more heat than light. What we see is that there definitely seems to be a lot of congestion on the through routes. We cannot differentiate whether that is because of the Covid changes we mentioned earlier or is something to do with the calming measures.

Chair: We have seven sections to go through, and we have gone through one so far. I ask Members to put your questions to just two of the witnesses, and make sure that you bring all of the witnesses in. Witnesses, it is perfectly okay to use the phrase, "I agree with Nick," if that is indeed the case.

Let us go to the impacts of home working and online shopping with Grahame Morris.

Q243 **Grahame Morris:** As you rightly say, Chair, this section is about the dramatic increase in both home working and online shopping due to the consequences of the pandemic, and the impact that has had on traffic levels on local roads.

Nick, it is clear that before the pandemic a majority of people, about 60%, used their own car to commute to work. Do you think that Government, councils and employers should be encouraging home working post pandemic if that means we use our cars less, or should they be encouraging more people to adopt cycling or walking?

Nicholas Lyes: I think that is a question for employers. Many employers will seek the feedback of their staff on what has worked for them and what has not worked for them. That might encourage more home working. I do not think that is a bad thing. What you will see is fewer high peaks of traffic during the peak periods of the day.

The evidence that we have from our research suggests that more people expect to work from home, but the number is probably not as high as one might expect. Where possible, if people want to use alternative ways to get to work, that is fine, but, as you rightly said, about 68% of all



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commutes to work are done by car. On average, those are about 10 miles. It is up to the individual to decide whether or not they want to cycle 10 miles to work and 10 miles back from work. That is an individual's choice.

From the evidence that I have seen from Department for Transport data, cycling levels during the pandemic have been quite erratic. That tends to suggest to me that it is highly weather dependent, believe it or not. It is just a simple case that people might look out of the window and say, "I'm not going to use my bicycle today because it's pouring with rain."

Q244 Grahame Morris: Martin, can I ask you the same question? You do not have to say, "I agree with Nick." We are talking about a huge increase, which may well be permanent, in online shopping. What are your thoughts on the reports that the Treasury is considering an internet tax? Should that be used and ring-fenced to relieve traffic congestion?

Martin McTague: I do not think there is very good evidence to support that. The evidence we have seen so far is that big tech would pass those charges on either to more businesses or to the consumer. When it comes to hybrid means of working, and whether people are going in and out of the office, I can see evidence that that is changing. People are thinking in terms of maybe two or three days in the office and the rest at home.

What is not catching up is transport infrastructure. On rail, there are still five-day season tickets, and that clearly needs to catch up with what is a rapidly changing world.

Grahame Morris: Thank you very much indeed. I will hand back to the Chair. I know this is not the Justice Committee, but apparently we are advocating shorter sentences.

Chair: I will move on to our next section and bring in Ben Bradshaw.

Q245 Mr Bradshaw: Thanks very much, Chair. This question is to Mary on the active users side, and to Martin on the business side. It is about the incentives and funding that local authorities have to encourage active travel.

Martin, I would like you to answer this because you said something very interesting earlier, if I heard you rightly. You said that you or the federation support the idea of road pricing or road charging as an alternative, but there are other schemes already. We have congestion charging and workplace charging, but none of them have been used very widely.

Mary, what would you like to see happen to give local authorities the powers and the funds they need to shift people to active travel?

Mary Creagh: We would like to see more support from Government where councils decide that they are going to introduce local road user charging as a means of tackling air pollution. They have the powers, but it is explicitly stated in legislation that they should only be used as a last



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resort. We think they could be used more widely in order to provide the nudge factor to make driving less attractive, and to be able to invest in public transport alternatives.

Local authorities are responsible for 97% of the network. Two thirds of all traffic goes on local authority roads, yet the money they had to spend on fixing the roads and pavements was £5 billion over the last four years versus the £27 billion the Government have given to the strategic road network. We would like to see much more money going to local authorities to fix the maintenance backlog.

The Government's money is also focused on capital, which is new schemes, new roads and new junctions that induce and bring more traffic on to the roads. We would like to see more revenue spending and a proper allocation for pavements as a means of transport infrastructure. If we want people to walk and to cycle, we have to invest in that infrastructure. At the moment, we do not really know how much is spent. There are some figures showing that around 9% is spent on pavements. We do not know the costs of failing to invest in our pavements in slips, trips and falls and claims against local authorities.

Workplace parking levies, as seen in Nottingham, are being thought about in Leicester, Hounslow and other places. They have a really important part to play. On the fuel duty question, we think an 11-year freeze is the wrong message. At a time when season tickets and rail fares are going up, and have gone up by about 43% over the last 10 years, we think that is the wrong priority, as is the announcement today about a freeze on air passenger duty. We hope that that will be a short-term measure.

Q246 Mr Bradshaw: Martin, do you have a quick answer on your apparent support for road pricing as opposed to other measures? It is very interesting, and I am quite encouraged that a business organisation is coming out in favour of road pricing.

Martin McTague: We believe that things like workplace levies just tend to penalise people who have no alternative. If you have a smarter way in which you can use road charging to work on congested areas and for rural areas, where there is very little problem in terms of pollution and congestion, you do not need to levy. We think that is a smart way around many of the problems.

We have been advocates for many years of ring-fencing for local areas. If there is one issue that consistently comes top of our list on local roads, it is potholes.

Q247 Mr Bradshaw: Mary, what do you think the Government should do when faced with the small number of local authorities such as West Sussex, which was named earlier? Kensington and Chelsea is another one; it does not have a single segregated cycle route in the whole of the borough. They have recently ripped one out, which has prevented children and



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their parents who used to cycle to school from cycling to school safely. They now have to brave the terrible traffic on Kensington High Street. What should the Government do with local authority obstructiveness or recalcitrance like that?

Mary Creagh: The Government have provided funding for some authorities to invest in local cycling and walking infrastructure plans, but there are still dozens of local authorities that do not have them. They are the baseline measurement to show that authorities and councillors are thinking about the infrastructure that is needed for active travel, and are designing places around people and retrofitting our old Victorian and medieval road networks for a low-carbon net-zero future. In a way, some of the allocations of funding should be linked to those infrastructure plans.

It is a pity that the cycling and walking infrastructure strategy has been put off because of the delays to the comprehensive spending review, but we know that over the next 10 years we have to put huge investment into our towns, cities and villages in order to encourage active travel. The baseline is, what are your plans to create the infrastructure?

Chair: Chris Loder wants to come in on the subject of funding and planning.

Q248 **Chris Loder:** I want to ask the panel's opinion in respect of funding. I noted that Mary just said that much more funding is required. How much more funding do you think is needed, particularly in London? For example, London was reported in *The Guardian* not so long ago as having £708 transport spending per person as compared with places like the north of England at just £289 per person. In effect, therefore, when rural people pay their taxes they are subsidising transport in London. How much more money does the Mayor of London need?

Chair: Can I ask you to put that to one witness?

Chris Loder: Can I ask you, Mary?

Mary Creagh: The funding for London tends to reflect the fact that it is the capital city and the fact that the network is subsidised, as most other capital city public transport networks are subsidised.

Going back to your point about your constituents feeling that they are subsidising London's transport system, there needs to be greater equity as part of the Government's levelling-up agenda. It is not about robbing Peter to pay Paul. It is about bringing everybody up to the level of London's mass transit system and reinstalling bus services that have been lost. It is clear that we cannot have social mobility without physical mobility. For people on low incomes who cannot afford cars, the bus is still the major way of getting access to services and to work.

Q249 **Chris Loder:** It is indeed, especially for urban but also for rural areas. Because of certain decisions that have been made, where fares, for example, are frozen, it feels to me that there is not a willingness more



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locally to increase the funding, rather than through taxation. Thank you, Mary.

Martin, do you have any comments?

Martin McTague: There is just one thing I would add to what I said before. It often gets missed that there are 20,000 taxi drivers in London who are really toiling under the current circumstances. There are no tourists or commuters. Many of them are facing ruin. There are thousands of cabs laid up. They are having to return their badges. That is a serious issue. We know that those vehicles are Covid safe. They are vehicles that are suitable for disabled people, yet they are not getting used.

Chris Loder: Thank you very much.

Chair: Let's look at how we can encourage people to cycle more.

Q250 **Ruth Cadbury:** The main reason I cycle rather than get my car out in my constituency is that it is usually quicker because of the congestion. There must be a business cost to that.

The Government are talking about introducing a target to reduce car traffic after the pandemic. Nick and Martin, what would be a realistic target and how would we measure it?

Nicholas Lyes: That is a difficult question to answer. I would probably try to look at it from the point of view of where to start reducing the number of car journeys. As I alluded to earlier, if we want to start looking at car journeys that are not essential, I would start looking at some of the journeys that are low mileage—a mile and under, or maybe two miles and under—and try to work from there. Potentially, if you can convert some of those people to bicycles instead, it might give you a realistic target to approach, but I probably cannot give a specific figure on that.

Martin McTague: To be frank, I think alternatives are probably more important than targets. There are lots of good examples around the world of where you can bring in alternative ways of travelling. There has been eloquent support for cycling here, but there are also things like on-demand buses. There are great examples in the Netherlands, where routes can have 130 stops. They just have on-demand request.

We are coming up with smarter ways of moving people around—car sharing and so on. That is the route to success in decarbonising a lot of these issues.

Q251 **Ruth Cadbury:** Do you think there is enough support for last-mile deliveries to decarbonise, or to use different kinds of vehicles that could go on cycle lanes?

Martin McTague: No, I do not think there is enough support. There needs to be a lot more innovation in those areas. It would help a lot.

Chair: I will move us on because I am keen to get all the way through



the brief and the evidence. I will go to Greg Smith and then straight over to Lilian Greenwood.

- Q252 **Greg Smith:** Given that the discussion has predominantly focused on the decarbonisation aspect of a shift to active travel, is there not an awkward truth? If that is the focus, given the Government's ban on new petrol or diesel cars from 2030, given the rapid uptake of consumers choosing to buy electric vehicles, and given that hydrogen technology is being developed at pace and that at some point in the not-too-distant future we will have a second, clean version of the private car available commercially, is it not the case that, with Government intervention and general market forces, the private car is becoming clean anyway and we need to look at this in a more rounded way?

Nicholas Lyes: Yes, I would agree with that. There are two sides to look at. There is obviously the congestion element. You want in some way to try to reduce congestion, in city centres in particular. From a decarbonisation point of view, it is absolutely right that the Government encourage people to take up electric vehicles or alternatively fuelled vehicles. As I said previously, people are dependent on their vehicle and car use is still going to be here. People are going to be using their cars for many years to come.

It is absolutely right that we accelerate the transition towards zero-emission vehicles across the country. It is something that we at the RAC support. Alongside that, you have to look at the high-quality charging infrastructure, to ensure that if people go electric they have the confidence that they are going to be able to charge.

From the research that we have done, the up-front cost still tends to be of concern. With market forces, as you say, that will start to change, as more and more electric vehicle models come on to the market, but right now there could be something that the Treasury looks at. We have the plug-in car grant, for example, which is running until 2023. Maybe there are other incentives that could be used to encourage the take-up of electric vehicles.

- Q253 **Greg Smith:** Roger, perhaps I could put it as provocatively as this: vehicles are getting cleaner, so what is the problem?

Roger Geffen: I have to say that I only partly agree with Nick. Nick is absolutely right that we need to go for the electric car, but we also need fewer cars as well as newer cars. Electric cars still cause congestion and road casualties. They still cannot be driven by children, older and blind people, and they cause physical inactivity. All of those wider crises, whose economic costs I gave you earlier, still need tackling, as well as tackling electric cars.

Research by consultants for Transport for Quality of Life suggests that, even if we ignore those wider costs, making cars still involves carbon. The manufacturing and disposal of cars still involves carbon emissions, as well as the wider costs. We need fewer cars. We need a rebalancing of



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transport spending towards sustainable transport options. It would be popular.

Martin talked earlier about road pricing. Recent polling evidence from Ipsos Mori shows that support for road pricing has gone up immensely since 2007. In 2007, support for road pricing was about 33%; it is now up to 62%. That gets even higher if the revenues are then used to improve public transport or to tackle climate change or air pollution. It is particularly strong if the cost is higher for the most polluting vehicles.

As long as you reallocate the funding to give people all of the alternatives that I talked about in my previous answer to you, there is public support for less traffic. This goes back to my earlier point about how policy measures that achieve less traffic are not the same as being anti-car. There is public support for less traffic, and support for cycling and walking is part of that.

Greg Smith: I would love to develop this further, but I can feel the Chair's eyes looking at the clock.

Chair: There will be another opportunity when we look at road pricing in our inquiry, so that wets the whistle.

Q254 **Lilian Greenwood:** Good morning to all of our witnesses. Picking up where Greg left off, congestion is very costly to businesses. Therefore, are measures to encourage modal shift—whether that is to public transport or to cycling and walking—pro-business and pro-motorist? Martin, can I come to you first?

Martin McTague: Yes, I think they are pro-business. What we are not trying to do is artificially drive that shift. If people are left with no alternative than, say, a diesel van to shift product from their factory or shop to another venue, it is no good preaching to them constantly about the virtues of shifting. You need to give them a real alternative. That is what is lacking in some of the debate.

People talk about electric vehicles and battery charging, but there are very few options for vans, lorries and buses. They are an important part of the mix.

Q255 **Lilian Greenwood:** Yesterday, I met a business that probably runs one of the biggest fleets in the country. Their priority asks of Government on decarbonisation and moving to EVs were expansion of the on-street charging network so that their people could charge their vehicles overnight at home if they did not have a drive, and making it easier for fleet users to be able to pay for, and use, the rapid charger network. At the moment, you have to have a proliferation of apps, and claiming your expenses back is a nightmare. Do you agree with them?

Martin McTague: I agree with them, yes. They are absolutely right. At the moment, the network is rolling out very slowly and is nowhere near capable of dealing with the potential explosion in EVs. I cannot see any



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alternative other than Government intervention that will accelerate that process.

Q256 Lilian Greenwood: Nick, can I come to you on whether measures to encourage and enable modal shift are pro-business and pro-motorist? What is your view?

Nicholas Lyes: I think they are. I probably agree with everything that Martin has just said. It is about giving people choice. It is about giving people other options. Certainly, one of the things we have found among drivers when we do research is that they quite like the idea of park and ride schemes. In effect, that allows them to get close to a city centre and then take an alternative so that they are not caught up in the horrendous and horrible parking nightmares that they might encounter in the city centre itself.

We are in 2021 now. There are alternatives to the traditional park and ride. You can have park and pedal, where you have electric bicycles that can take you the last mile. You have e-scooters that could potentially be fully legalised. Those are all alternatives that can help shift traffic volumes away from urban areas and reduce congestion there.

As I said, you have to have the alternatives there in the first place. At the moment, from our research, they are not there.

Q257 Lilian Greenwood: I know that people across the country, including many of my constituents, are worried about what is happening to their local high street. Mary and Roger, what evidence is there of the impact of measures to increase walking and cycling on high street businesses?

Mary Creagh: Our "Pedestrian Pound" research report, which we conducted before the pandemic, showed that creating people-friendly streets, and replacing car parking spaces with parklets, drives up footfall in local areas by between 25% and 30%. It can drive sales up by 30% as well. There is anecdotal evidence from the lockdowns and post lockdowns last summer that that has been a really important point and has helped small businesses to survive the very difficult Covid-safe measures they have had to deal with.

We can look, for example, at the changes to the pedestrian crossing in Oxford Circus. When that was changed to an X crossing rather than a four-way square crossing, sales in the local Nike shop went up by 25%. Creating streets that are designed around desire and designed to create trees and places for people to walk and rest are important in helping business survival.

Going back to the modal shift question and decarbonisation, the Secretary of State has powers to report on traffic reductions under the traffic reduction Act 1998. We would like to see that Act set out very clearly on an annual basis what the targets are. At the moment, we seem to be flying blind. If we do not have targets, we do not know what we are trying to get to. The Tyndall Centre says that, even if all new cars have



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ultra-low emissions by 2035, we need a 58% reduction in car mileage between 2016 and 2035 to meet our climate goals. If we are not planning for that, we are going to miss those targets. It is imperative that policy is joined up across the piece and, in particular, that planning policy does not build out-of-town suburbs and housing estates that mean people are reliant on the car. We have to plan better and integrate transport planning with it.

Q258 Lilian Greenwood: I am a massive fan of those X crossings. I am amazed that there are only one or two. Roger, what evidence do you have about the impacts of walking and cycling measures on local businesses?

Roger Geffen: Wherever low-traffic neighbourhoods and so on have gone in that have covered retail, there have been initial fears. As soon as you let them settle down, retailers find that it is actually better for footfall. Retailers initially tend to underestimate the extent to which their customers arrive by walking, cycling or public transport and overestimate their dependence on passing trade from cars. Once schemes go in, they find that an attractive, people-friendly, cycle-friendly and pedestrian-friendly environment brings in the trade.

The Government also underestimate that. Perhaps I could pick up a question that you asked Grant Shapps in his evidence to the Committee just over a month ago. You asked whether the Government had research as to whether £2 billion was sufficient funding for cycling and walking. The answer was yes, they have that research. It has been referred to in three parliamentary answers, but the Government have sat on that research for over 14 months. My understanding is that it shows that £2 billion is only about a quarter to a third of what is needed to meet the Government's own targets to double cycling and increase walking by 2025.

You also noted that the Secretary of State seemed to be unclear about the relationship between the 2025 targets for cycling and walking and the 2030 targets for cycling and walking. It is important that the Government are clear about what their targets are and that they publish the research that shows whether the funding is adequate to meet the targets, and then act on the findings of that research as they set budgets for cycling and walking in the spending review and the second cycling and walking investment strategy that will follow it.

My plea to the Committee is, please help us to get that report unearthed because the Government have sat on it for a very long time.

Lilian Greenwood: Thank you. It is very clear what the Committee needs to do on that.

Chair: I would like to squeeze in the last two sections, but we have hit the time, so apologies to the next panel. Penultimate is the Government's vision and investment in cycling and walking.



Q259 **Mr Bradshaw:** Roger, I do not want you to repeat what you just said to Lilian in response to the previous question. That was very interesting, but I want to ask you and Mary in general terms what you thought of the Prime Minister's "bold strategy", as he called it when he launched it last July. It is not just the £2 billion. Where will this leave us in terms of spend per head compared with some of our neighbouring countries in northern Europe that have healthier people and less congested and less polluted cities because they have traditionally invested more than us? Do you think it will do the trick?

Mary Creagh: It is certainly a good start. It is good that it has been put on the record and is out there. Nine months on, we are still waiting for changes to traffic management orders to enable camera enforcement outside London and for local authorities to put in school streets, for example. The inequities between the London situation and the rest of the country situation persist. That heightens inequalities between London and the regions. Those measures are important tools for social inclusion and for levelling up. The changes to the planning system did not mention transport and transport planning. We think that planners need to be intimately involved in the design of new areas so that we do not make the mistakes of the past, and we design inclusive neighbourhoods.

Roger mentioned the money. It probably will not be enough. We need to make sure that the £2 billion that was promised is definitely in the comprehensive spending review next November.

Q260 **Mr Bradshaw:** Roger, where does the £2 billion leave us? The Netherlands spends £20 per head per year on cycling. I may have that figure wrong. Where will this leave us?

Roger Geffen: It is about £24 a head. Before the £2 billion, we were seeing average spend outside London of about £7 a head. I do not know where the £2 billion will leave us because it depends on how much additional funding the Government enable local authorities to put in to support it. As Mary said, London is well ahead on spending. It is spending about £17 per head, whereas in the rest of the country it is more like £7 per head on average.

There is a lot that we strongly welcome in the "Gear change" vision. It has excellent cycling infrastructure design standards, and there is encouragement for local authorities to plan networks. There is combining of cycling and public transport and support for health projects, working with the NHS, to boost cycling. Those are all good things, but the funding is still inadequate. We do not know what it is going to be. It is very disappointing that spending next year will be actually less on cycling and walking, as things stand, than it was last year. We are going in the wrong direction rather than boosting local authorities' capacity to scale up their ability to spend at the levels we need to be spending if we are to meet the Government's target.



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The Government need to put in place Active Travel England, the body they proposed in the “Gear change” vision, which is supposed to both support and push local authorities, with the threat of withholding funding if they do not do the right things. It is like an Ofsted for cycling and walking—a supportive inspectorate—and they need to put it in place quickly to make sure that local authorities are both supported and put under some pressure to spend the money well in accordance with the Government’s design standards. Ultimately, the crucial thing is to make sure that the spending is in line with the targets, to briefly reiterate the crucial point I made in answer to the earlier question.

Mr Bradshaw: Thank you very much.

Chair: We come to our very last section. Could I request brief answers? Simon Jupp will ask about the emergency active travel fund.

Q261 **Simon Jupp:** I will try to manage brief questions as well. Good morning to the panel.

The emergency active travel fund from DFT managed to encourage more people to take up cycling and walking. There were some schemes in my own constituency, aiding social distancing measures.

Minister Heaton-Harris said last year that the majority of councils reported a positive impact. Ten councils had removed their schemes and many had modified them after feedback from local communities. That is to be expected, I guess. In my own constituency, two schemes had to be scrapped before even being put in place because of a backlash by residents and local businesses. Mary and Martin, how successful has the emergency active travel fund been?

Martin McTague: I think it has missed its target as far as many businesses are concerned. There is a real sense that in rural areas it is completely missing its objectives. When it comes to urban areas, pop-up arrangements are seen as disruptive. They need more time to plan for the changes that are implemented by the pop-up plans. The general view is negative.

Mary Creagh: What the emergency schemes showed is what can be done at scale and at speed in a crisis. Has every scheme been perfect? No, it has not, but some of the early evidence in London has shown that you can build and bake in equity. You can do it in areas where people are suffering the effects of transport and vehicle movements but where they do not have access to cars themselves. It can help improve equality. It has shown the public’s appetite for change, and what can happen if you design with people.

Some of the pop-up pavements and pop-up cycleways have issues around guide dogs recognising the new pavement in the road. Not everything has been perfect, but there has been an awful lot of mythology around what happened last year. We have tried to address that in our myth-busting document, which is on our website. It was co-produced by the Walking and Cycling Alliance. It basically says that the



evidence shows that these initiatives have been popular with the public. Councils need to communicate with people and demonstrate. They need to show that they are listening and give schemes time to bed in and tweak them where there are problems.

Q262 Simon Jupp: Roger, are the public ready for the, first, hundreds and then thousands of miles of segregated cycle lanes that the Government promised?

Roger Geffen: Yes, there is plenty of evidence that the public are overwhelmingly supportive of cycle lanes. A majority of six to one say that they would support the sorts of measures that Mary has just been talking about—the pop-up cycle lanes and the more permanent cycle lanes. There is overwhelming support.

We have taken polling, the Government have taken polling, Sustrans have taken polling, and the cycling industry has taken polling. Our polling has shown not only very strong public support for these measures but that, because of the rather toxic debate around this, people think that opposition is much higher than it really is and that support is much lower. Of course, when people think that support is lower, they are less likely to voice their support because they feel that they are in a beleaguered minority, when actually they are not. Of course, it also emboldens the opponents to think that they have public support behind them, when they do not.

It has an effect on the councillors who are making the decisions. They feel that the oppositional voices are public opinion, when they are not, and therefore they take out the measures when in fact they have public support. That is all because of the toxic debate and the way that the issue has been polarised in the media. The supportive voices have not been allowed to come through. There is huge public support for walking and cycling and for alternatives that would allow us to have less traffic on our roads. Less traffic is popular, to go back to my earlier point.

Q263 Simon Jupp: Thank you. Martin, the same question to you.

Martin McTague: The point that keeps coming back to us is that intermodal travel is missing from the equation. Yes, cycle lanes are one thing, but if you want to bring your bike and you want to get on a train or a bus, then what? That is the bit that is missing from a lot of the plans. We would like to see that attacked first before other measures are considered.

Q264 Simon Jupp: Staying with you, Martin, and keeping in mind business, I mentioned some concern from businesses in my constituency about some of the schemes that are put forward. What were the unintended consequences of the fund and subsequent temporary schemes, in your view?

Martin McTague: The unintended consequences are some of the ones that Mary mentioned, where you bring in arrangements that perhaps



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have not been thought through carefully enough. They cause more disruption than they cure.

I think the intentions are good and the motives are good. Roger is right to say that some of the debate is unnecessarily polarised, but we have not quite got it right yet; there are quite a few things that can be done to improve it.

Simon Jupp: Thank you, Martin.

Chair: Time has defeated us, but I want to say a huge thank you to all our four witnesses—Mary, Nick, Roger and Martin—for giving us such comprehensive evidence. We wish you very well. We hope that you will continue to engage with us as we march through our inquiry. For now, thank you very much for your time.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Chris Boardman, Mark Valleley and Dr Norman.

Q265 **Chair:** Our second panel is comprised of local authority and active travel commissioners. I apologise for the delay in getting started. Could I ask our witnesses to introduce themselves?

Chris Boardman: I am Chris Boardman, cycling and walking commissioner for Greater Manchester. I am policy adviser to British Cycling.

Mark Valleley: My name is Mark Valleley. I am technical lead for Transport for the South East, which is the sub-national transport body formed in the south-east of England. I am also an experienced practitioner in the delivery of local walking and cycling schemes in a local authority context.

Dr Norman: My name is Will Norman. I am the walking and cycling commissioner for London.

Q266 **Chair:** Do any Members have anything they wish to declare? Mark has worked in East Sussex, which is where my constituency is, so I should reference that.

The first question I was going to ask is linked to the car, but I am not going to ask that. Quite frankly, we have talked a lot about the car and this is supposed to be about additional forms of transport—cycling, walking and other active travel. Let me ask something a bit more positive, rather than polarised.

Obviously, the pandemic has been incredibly difficult, challenging and heart-wrenching for many. We have, however, seen an increase, an uptick, in active travel modes and usage. What are the positives that we have seen on that front, and how can we build on them?

Chris Boardman: I have mentioned this in several publications and interviews; effectively, the pandemic caused a global consultation on how



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we use our streets. We effectively turned off motor traffic, and it was incredible to see what happened for lots of different reasons. It was great weather, people were bored, they had bored kids, and they wanted to get exercise. A lot of shift workers whose travel was disrupted by the lack of public transport changed, and we saw a huge uptick.

The big message for me to take from that was the fact that if you give people safe space they will adapt and change very quickly. That was inspiring stuff to show that not only did people do it, but they enjoyed it. Overall, we were seeing spikes of up to 300% increase, and we are still significantly ahead of pre-Covid in Greater Manchester. At the moment, it is proving to be the most robust form of transport bouncing back as lockdown eases.

Q267 **Chair:** Thank you, Chris. Following the order of introduction, can I go to Mark next?

Mark Valleley: There have been some absolutely phenomenal increases in levels of cycling and walking. The DFT statistics clearly demonstrate that. Lots of it has been people making additional trips for leisure purposes and health and fitness. What we clearly need to do now is translate those, anchor them and make them a permanent feature moving forward. We need to start to introduce infrastructure over the longer term that will ensure that we lock in cycling and walking as people's primary mode of choice for local trips.

Q268 **Chair:** Thank you, Mark. Finally, to Will.

Dr Norman: I totally agree. Covid has been an exceptionally dark cloud, but one of the few silver linings has been the astonishing change in how people are using our streets. In London, we have seen rapid roll-out of temporary measures, building on everything that we had delivered before. Last weekend and the weekend before, we had a 200% increase in cycling across the city, with 300% and 400% in some places.

Obviously, commuting levels are down. Overall numbers of journeys are down, yet the number of people cycling is still above previous levels, despite it being February and cold. We are seeing a massive change, and it is not just cycling. Cycling tends to hog the headlines in a lot of this, but we are seeing a huge change in walking, too. A survey that we did recently showed that 31% of Londoners are now walking journeys they used to use the car for. We have seen that 57% of Londoners are walking more and walking further. That is good news, not just for transport but for public health and the inactivity crisis we have talked about. It is good news for our mental health and for the local high street, as we heard from previous witnesses.

Q269 **Chair:** Thank you for the succinct answers. That will help us to cover the entire session.

I want to come back to Chris. I remember when we came up to Manchester. You gave us evidence, and you were giving us the example



of mini crossings that you were trying to put in. Even though everything proved safe, because it was not gold-plate safety standard you could not get the Department to sign off on it. We have heard of similar issues across the country, where enhancements cannot be delivered because of regulation. Have we made any progress on that type of scenario? Do you feel that the pandemic may open the door to more innovation and creativity?

Chris Boardman: Building on evidence that has already been given and talking about activity, we often get strategy and activity the wrong way round. We are doing a lot of things in Greater Manchester that we would very much like to see Government doing, one of them being the piece of research that you alluded to.

We have designed a new type of junction—a Cyclops junction—and we had to pioneer that. It is now being used across the country, and we have interest from other countries. It is a particular type of crossing that we have to get DFT approval for. The piece of work on crossings that you mentioned is, essentially, at the mouth of side roads, and is done around the world, effectively, and in pretty much every supermarket car park because that is private land. We are not allowed to do that so we have had to push that work. We are most of the way through the trials. Unsurprisingly, it is incredibly positive that the crossings make crossing the road safer. The evidence will be in full in the next few weeks.

At the end of the simulated trials—we had to do all that stuff by the book and gather the evidence—we had 100% recognition by both drivers and pedestrians who took part in the trials as to what the crossing marks meant, despite the absence of Belisha beacons and zig-zags. It is overwhelming so far. I hope that we will move to on-road trials quickly so that we can use this device that can cheaply make walking easier.

Why is Greater Manchester doing this? I think it should really be for the Department for Transport to come up with ways to get more people travelling actively, rather than a region.

Chair: Hopefully, we can come back and see you again when we are allowed. I will open up now to Members.

Q270 **Lilian Greenwood:** Last week, the Chancellor decided not to end the freeze on fuel duty, reportedly because people have relied on their cars throughout the pandemic. Is that the right decision or a missed opportunity?

Dr Norman: This ties in a bit with some of the discussion on the anti-car debate. Certainly, in London it is about providing choice so that people can take cleaner, greener and healthier forms of transport, such as walking or cycling, maybe for all of their journey, but part of their journey is just as important. It is public transport; how you walk to the train station or to the bus stop. That is good for people's health. It is good for the environment and that is great. There has to be a carrot. There has to be encouragement, enabling people. We know that people



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want to do it. We have seen that through the pandemic. When there is no traffic, suddenly the streets are full of cyclists, families cycling and kids walking to parks. We know they want it, so we have to make our streets safer to do that.

Coupled with the carrot, I think there is need for more of a stick, and there is a missed opportunity in terms of a fuel tax. I was worried to read in the papers that there might even be a reduction in duty on aviation. That strikes me as exactly the wrong direction to meet the carbon objectives that the Government have set out, as well as for improving the uptake of travel on the railways and encouraging the recovery in public transport.

Q271 **Lilian Greenwood:** Could I ask the same question of Mark? Rail fares were up 2.6% last week. I do not know what is happening to bus fares across the country, but I doubt they have held flat. Fuel duty is frozen. How do you see that, Mark?

Mark Valleley: I quite understand the decision that has been made, in terms of trying to balance short-term issues about the pandemic, and people wanting to get back in their cars following the pandemic and go about their business.

A bigger issue for the Chancellor, if I could raise it, is the impact of the shift to electric vehicles on fuel duty and vehicle excise duty moving forward. There is a big headache emerging in terms of the £40 billion that the Chancellor receives from vehicle excise duty and fuel duty; it is disappearing over time and will continue to disappear as we shift to EVs. Some way of replacing that has to be found. As we heard in the earlier evidence session, road user charging offers the prospect for the Chancellor to be able to continue to maintain those receipts, which are general taxation. Only a quarter of it is used for road improvements. The majority is used as general taxation to build schools and hospitals.

There is an immediate issue, but the bigger issue that needs to be resolved is how in the future the Exchequer is going to maintain that very important source of revenue.

Q272 **Lilian Greenwood:** Yes. Of course, that is something this Committee will be looking at.

Chris, I have a slightly different question for you. I have heard you describe investment in walking and cycling as a social justice issue. Can you explain more of your thinking around that to the Committee?

Chris Boardman: Thirty per cent. of people who live in Greater Manchester do not have a car, and the problems around that have been exacerbated over the last year, when we have asked people not to use public transport but we have not given them an alternative. We have exposed the fact that we are not serving a huge chunk of our community. We also want fewer people to drive, so we need investment in methods that give them an easy alternative, particularly for short journeys. We



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often use the word encourage. It is the wrong word; enable is the right word. We must give people a viable alternative to the thing that we do not want them to do. I do not think our strategies are prioritising them.

I am going to double back, if you don't mind, to the last point on fuel duty to give you a case in point. That is £46 billion every 11 years in lost revenue while, at the same time, public transport costs have gone up by 40%. That incentivises the things that you do not want at the cost of the things that you do.

That is why I mentioned at the start that you must decide what the strategy is and where you want to get to. Fifty per cent. of all journeys cycled or walked in 10 years' time is brilliant. Then you can look at your actions and say, "Does this get us closer or further away?" Things like freezing fuel duty do not take us in the right direction.

Q273 Lilian Greenwood: I noticed yesterday that *Transport Times* had a report about some research by Jo Field that looked at school runs. They found that most parents—80%—have not changed the way they travel to school. Some were now walking, but there was quite a chunk who had started using their cars instead of using different modes, and who possibly had previously used public transport.

Are you worried about that shift to cars and that congestion may get worse as the pandemic restrictions are eased? What are you doing to respond to it? Chris, do you have anything to add on that?

Chris Boardman: We are talking about a car-led recovery. If you take no action, it is inevitable. I suggest it is already in progress. If you look at the last 10 years, we now have 20 billion more miles being driven around homes. That is a 40% increase in Greater Manchester from just 10 years ago. Without proactive measures to curb that, it will accelerate now as people try to stay away from public transport from safety fears.

Worse than that, it removes the space for alternative modes, so people do not have a choice. They are not enabled to make a different choice. It really is a perfect storm unless we do something about it now.

Q274 Lilian Greenwood: What are the key measures that you are taking in Greater Manchester?

Chris Boardman: In its crudest terms, creating safe space for people to travel differently. We have saturated our streets with car use now. I heard a lot of talk in the earlier evidence about moving to electric vehicles and things. Electric vehicles potentially are our biggest problem because they give us a reason to not change. That means we will not get any space back. I think Roger Geffen highlighted all the major points. It does not touch our health. It does not touch most of the problems. It impacts on a tiny, small amount of very localised pollution. It is the population that have to account for over 60% of the carbon reductions. Those behaviours must change.



At the moment, the aspirations and the activity do not align. We are having to fight, as is happening in London, for every bit of space to allow people to travel differently. We keep trying to find ways why it is not possible, when the bigger picture and reality is that we have to. It is not hyperbole to say that we are facing a species-level crisis. This is the kind of small macro action that we need to take to resolve it.

Q275 Lilian Greenwood: Thanks, Chris. Mark, are you experiencing, or do you have the same concerns about, a rise in congestion? What are you doing in East Sussex, which may be very different from urban Greater Manchester, to address it there?

Mark Valleley: On the specific issue you raised about the school run, one of the themes of the active travel fund is the introduction of school streets. It is the introduction of measures around schools that encourage and enable people to walk their children to school and allow children to cycle to school. Obviously, we have to think about the immediate vicinity of the school.

Going back to the theme for this session, it needs wider investment in cycling and walking infrastructure that allows the children and parents to access the school from the neighbourhoods and places where they live. It is about targeted measures around schools, but a wider investment in cycling and walking infrastructure to enable people to get to the school gates by sustainable means.

Q276 Lilian Greenwood: Is that what you find? When you introduce your school streets schemes, do people change the way they travel to school, or do they still drive but just park somewhere different and then walk the last bit?

Mark Valleley: It is a mixed outcome sometimes. A key element is not just to introduce the infrastructure. The really important dynamic is working with the schools to inform teachers, parents and children about the measures that are being introduced to ensure that the benefits that you want to see are actually delivered. It is a combination of infrastructure and education to ensure, as far as possible, that you achieve the outcome you are looking for.

Q277 Lilian Greenwood: Will, yesterday the GLA commission study evaluating the air quality benefits of school streets found that there was a reduction of up to 23% in air pollution, strongly supported by parents. Some people have suggested that it just moves the pollution—it is the same around low-traffic neighbourhoods—from those streets to other streets, where perhaps more deprived or low-income households live. Is there any evidence to support that?

Dr Norman: No. In London, we now have 350 school streets. At the beginning of the year, I could have counted them on one hand, or maybe two hands. In London, a quarter of a million car journeys every morning are associated with the school run. Some of them need to be done by car, but many are local journeys that could be walked or cycled. The



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school streets, where you shut off the streets around a school at drop-off and pick-up, have had a remarkable effect. The study that we released found that they not only improved air quality, but reduced the number of parents driving to schools by 18% across the board.

Where you then build in cycle infrastructure and other things, such as in another school where there has been a more holistic approach and there are cycle lanes in the community and low-traffic neighbourhoods, we have seen a reduction in car traffic by 28%, an increase in cycling by 7% or 8%, walking up 8%, scooting and skateboarding and those amazing new cool gadgets that my kids seem to want all the time up 10%.

School streets work. The point is that they are not just shifting traffic elsewhere. They are reducing the number of people using cars in the first place. To tackle air quality we need fewer vehicles on our streets, and the vehicles we have need to be cleaner, which goes back to some of the previous arguments.

There is no evidence that I have seen in London that either school streets or low-traffic neighbourhoods shift air quality problems on to neighbouring streets. For example, evidence I have seen from one in Newham has shown a 40% improvement in air quality. The schemes in Lambeth that have just gone in this year have shown a reduction in traffic, not only in the low-traffic neighbourhoods but in the surrounding areas. Longer-term studies in Waltham Forest, where there have been schemes for several years, show an overall reduction in journeys, an increase in walking and cycling and a reduction in air pollution, not just on the minor roads and local roads but on the neighbouring roads because there are fewer journeys. It is not just about reducing the number of people cutting through roads. It is about making the shift for shorter journeys with cleaner, greener and healthier options.

I know that not all school journeys can be walked or cycled, but we have an inactivity crisis. London has the most inactive kids in the country. There is the idea of "park and stride" for a school in an outer-London suburb where there isn't population density and a lot of people drive their kids to school. They worked with a neighbouring supermarket and use the car park to drop off. The kids then organise a safe walking route from the car park to the school. That reduces the air quality problems around the school; it gives kids some exercise, and it makes the streets safer for kids who are walking to school. That ingenuity and innovation comes up with new ideas all the time in this space.

Lilian Greenwood: Thank you very much.

Chair: We are staying on the opening section, and I ask the witnesses to be brief with their responses. I want to bring in Chris Loder.

Q278 **Chris Loder:** TfL have told us that there is a real danger that when the restrictions ease we will, in effect, replace one public health crisis with another. I want to ask you whether you still think that risk is there.



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Dr Norman: Yes, I do. Usually in London, there are about 27 million journeys a day. During lockdown, that fell to 14 million at times. That is largely due to lockdown and the fact that people have adapted and people are working from home, as we have heard. Private transport, whether cycling or cars, has increased. People have been hesitant and reluctant to use the public transport network.

At one point, tube ridership was down to 5% of what it normally is. All year, it has not exceeded 40%. What we have seen is that the main strategic arteries in London have gone back to normal at 85%; it is right up there again in this lockdown. Last week, it was at 85% of normal demand, yet the overall number of journeys remains far fewer because of the restrictions.

If you take the current levels of traffic and then you factor in the additional journeys that will happen when people are all delighted to move out of lockdown and hope to regain some normal life, there is a very significant risk. I do not think it is any longer a risk but a certainty that we will see increasing traffic and associated problems of congestion and potentially air quality.

Q279 **Chris Loder:** I have two related points. First, if passenger demand is only 40% of what it was pre-lockdown, do you have a view as to whether or not associated subsidy for TfL should be reduced by an appropriate amount accordingly, and then maybe redistributed to other aspects of transport, whether in London or elsewhere?

The second point is that you said road transport had returned to roughly 85%.

Dr Norman: That was last week, yes.

Q280 **Chris Loder:** It was last week's number. If you reduce the capacity on our roads, you are going to have more congestion. Capacity has been reduced by the cycle lanes, the local traffic-free zones and so on. Is that in itself causing the environmental issue that you highlighted at the very beginning?

Dr Norman: First, on the reduced services point, throughout the whole crisis our key workers have continued to get around on the system: nurses, supermarket workers and cleaners. They have really demonstrated the need for that. Just because the number of people on a tube is reduced, whether the social distancing requirements are 2 metres or 1 metre, it reduces the capacity of that service. Cutting services at the moment is the very last thing that needs to happen because that will give people even less space. It is not linear. Cutting services does not automatically save money, because you have the existing tube infrastructure in place.

I totally disagree with you on doing that just because there is less demand at the moment. We all hope that demand increases, and it will have to increase in the future. We are still in lockdown. Some of the



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schools might have gone back, but we are still there. There is no argument at all. We need to make sure that our services and our capacity continue to operate at full level to allow people to move around with social distancing.

In terms of your point about the capacity of the road network, we need to look at the most efficient way to move people around our road network. Active travel is the most efficient way. We have looked at where cycle lanes have gone into existing roads. You will be very familiar with the Embankment bike lane that goes right outside the Houses of Parliament. I am sure that many of your colleagues use it.

Chris Loder: I use it.

Dr Norman: Good. That moves 5% more people than previously, even though you have taken out a lane of traffic. Air quality along that route has improved. What we need to do is make sure that we are using the road space that we have in the most effective and efficient way. Every study everywhere in the world shows that active transport—walking and cycling—is far more efficient in terms of that space.

This is not saying that we need to turn it all over to walking and cycling. We need to get those unnecessary shorter journeys to be—

Q281 **Chris Loder:** The specific question I was asking was about removal of capacity for cars. You have come back with 85% demand as of last week. Surely, reducing that capacity will increase traffic congestion and therefore pollution.

Dr Norman: It depends on what you use the capacity for. If you prioritise more efficient modes with the capacity that you are taking away, you are actually moving more people more effectively and increasing the capacity on our road network, which is exactly what we need to be doing.

Q282 **Chris Loder:** That is not quite the question I am asking. The question I am asking is, if you have a return to 85% and you reduce a considerable amount of capacity, does that not increase congestion and therefore pollution by default?

Dr Norman: No. There is no evidence of that.

Mark Valleley: I urge Members to look at some interesting TomTom data. There is the headline that traffic levels have returned to normal levels, but when you look at the patterns from the TomTom data across the day, the morning peaks, which are so difficult for me as a transport planner to deal with, have started to smooth out. The inference is that there is more trip-making activity during the middle of the day, which is an issue.

In terms of the impact on congestion, because of the smoothing out of the peaks, what the TomTom data clearly shows is that the total volume



of traffic levels have returned across the day, but because we do not have the peaks we are not getting the congestion levels that we were previously experiencing in a number of towns and cities across the UK. The TomTom data may well be of interest to people.

Chris Loder: Thank you.

Chair: We are indebted to the CBI who helped us to speak to some leading employers about patterns of working from home. We are going to touch on that subject, as well as online shopping, with Grahame Morris.

Q283 **Grahame Morris:** Will, it is clear that there has been a massive boom both in home working, by necessity, but also in internet shopping, perhaps also because of necessity. Post pandemic it will be a double-edged sword, particularly for people in London. There has been a dramatic increase in home deliveries, particularly food deliveries. If we are serious about trying to ease congestion, do you think that we should be taxing or encouraging internet home deliveries?

Dr Norman: Thank you, Grahame. It is a really good question. The growth in vans, for example in London, massively predates the growth in online shopping. From about 2001 to 2019, we have had a 27% increase in vans in London, which is often due to servicing businesses, construction and the loss of industrial land and those sorts of things. It has been a challenge for some time.

We have seen a big increase in online deliveries. There has been an increase from about 20% pre-pandemic to a third of total retail being online. That will lead to an increase in vans and in online deliveries, and it is likely to continue. One of the big questions coming out of this is how many of those behaviours and those patterns will continue. About 87% of people say that they are going to continue to do it, so we need to tackle this.

I think we have to think carefully about raising—

Q284 **Grahame Morris:** I am sorry to interrupt you, Will, but it is a double-edged sword. If a supermarket delivery van is making 20 or 30 deliveries, rather than individual householders making that journey by car, it is a good thing. Home deliveries actually relieve congestion, particularly in built-up areas. There is no simple answer. It needs a lot of thought and analysis.

Dr Norman: I agree. We do not want an unforeseen consequence of people having to pay more for their deliveries and then shifting to car journeys to do big shops. We need more consolidation of freight deliveries, last-mile deliveries and the role of cargo bikes. Sainsbury's recently trialled a cargo-bike delivery and found it was four times faster using the bikes than vans in London. The Co-op exclusively delivers by bikes at the moment. That is an interesting area, as is businesses working together.



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In Bond Street, for example, we work with trucks and have reduced the number of vehicle deliveries from 144 to nine a day, collecting rubbish. That has saved a huge amount of traffic but has also reduced carbon emissions by 90%. That is about businesses working together. It is cheaper for them, but it is also better for our roads and for our health.

Q285 Grahame Morris: Chris, can I ask you a related question? It is more to do with home working than online shopping and home deliveries. You may have heard in the first session Martin McTague from the Federation of Small Businesses. He was understandably opposed to workplace parking levies. They are unpopular with the people who have to pay them. Given the efforts that are being made to relieve congestion and encourage people to use either public transport or more active travel—I want to ask you as well, Mark, in your area—are you considering reducing workplace parking levies in Manchester after the pandemic, when things start returning to normal?

Chris Boardman: Nothing that I am aware of is being considered at the moment. It is not directly in my sphere of work. Obviously, London is a decade ahead of Greater Manchester in its transition to move towards more active travel. It is wonderful to hear the data. We have tangible before and after effects. Most importantly, it is strategically joined up and looks at things like unintended consequences, as you have just alluded to, Grahame. I think that is important.

While I am going to slightly dodge your question on a workplace parking levy, I would say that in general the thing that you do is to tax carbon. It should be gently at first, to allow people to adjust, and then more aggressively as we create alternatives. That goes for pretty much everything in how we utilise our public funds. It could be a big part.

It is very important to add that there need to be alternatives. What we saw with active travel measures last year was that speed was the problem. I am slightly digressing again, but where those quick measures worked was where they were implementing something that was already planned. Where we had to just react quickly, there were quite a few mistakes made. It needs to be part of a much bigger look at why we want to tax people and what their alternatives are. As long as we can answer those questions, it could very well be part of the solution.

Q286 Grahame Morris: That is a very diplomatic answer, Chris. Mark, do you have a view? Very quickly, because the Chair is looking daggers at us.

Mark Valleley: It is not in my geography, but Members are possibly aware of the scheme in Nottingham and how effective it has been in that locality in managing demand and raising revenue to provide improvements to the tram infrastructure. Workplace parking levies may have a role to play in managing demand in certain locations, but they are not a one-size-fits-all solution. They very much have to be tailored to the mechanism.



Going back to an earlier question, in terms of demand management, a far more effective and universal way of getting a grip of that would be through the introduction of a pay-as-you-go system for road use. Road use charging is the language that is used. That probably has more universal applicability. The risks with introducing local schemes are the displacement effects. If I do it in my area, what is the displacement going to be of economic activity to other locations in my area? Am I going to lose out economically? We have to think big when thinking about potential solutions to the issue.

Grahame Morris: Thank you very much for that answer, Mark. That is really helpful.

Chair: Let us move to the next section about how schemes are put in place to encourage people to use the car less and to cycle and walk more. Over to Greg Smith to lead us off.

Q287 **Greg Smith:** I want to come back to a theme that came up in the first session about depolarising the argument between those who choose to use their cars and those who choose to go for a more active form of travel. In my own constituency, we have the Waddesdon to Aylesbury Greenway. We want more schemes like that put in place to enable people to cycle, but there is a reality in the countryside and for rural communities that the car is essential, especially for those who live in villages where there is no primary school, and certainly no secondary school, and who are trying to get round a supermarket with a toddler and a baby and get 10 bags of shopping home. It is not feasible to do it in any other way at the moment.

First of all, can I ask the witnesses' opinion on how we find a better balance between the two and take the polarisation out of the argument, starting with Chris?

Chris Boardman: There are several elements. If I am correct—this is from memory—rural communities represent about 16% and the rest are urban or reasonably densely packed. It would be reasonable to say, why would you start there? You start in a place where you can do the most good, as in London and in Greater Manchester where we connect people, and active travel is a viable alternative to the car, or will be if we make space for it. That is important.

The second thing was alluded to in earlier evidence. These are people moving about. It is not about a mode. It is important that we do not talk about driving or cycling; it is how people move about as appropriate, given the area.

Another thing you said was "at the moment." That is the key. We often start with an assumption that we need a solution that does not require us to change anything. That sets us off on the wrong path. Some of the things that we need to change may take time. If we are to do this in a sustainable way, we need to recognise that.



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There is shopping locally. We have seen lots of local shops shut down because we get in the car and drive 20 minutes to a Tesco. That is what we do now; that is standard, but we do not have to accept it. I think that in the last year we have learnt that local high streets are doing well because people are walking and riding more locally. That is one of the changes that is part of, to use the cliché, building back better.

Q288 Greg Smith: Maybe I could pick up on something you just said, that some things take time. It is clearly a straightforward comment, but as we are looking at this through the lens of decarbonisation, I will put back to the witnesses now a comment I made in the previous session. Cars are becoming cleaner. The emissions that are coming out of diesel and petrol engines today are a lot less than the emissions coming out of diesel and petrol engines 20 years ago. More people are taking up electric vehicles. By 2030, the Government say you cannot buy a new petrol or diesel engine, which will force people down the electric route. Who knows, we might even have commercially viable hydrogen cars in that window. To put it a bit provocatively, as I did last time, vehicles are becoming cleaner, so if this is about decarbonisation what is the problem?

Chris Boardman: When I took the job in Greater Manchester, we did an exercise looking at the cost of doing nothing. What is the cost of the status quo? It is the question that is never asked. It was £3.7 billion a year when we wrap up road danger, congestion and all of those things together.

When you take electric vehicles and say, "We are going to swap out all those private vehicles and put electric ones in instead," we have addressed a tiny fraction of one of those things. We have addressed localised pollution, and that is pretty much it. That is why I said earlier, slightly melodramatically, that electric cars are a danger because they are a route to give people a reason to not change and not address the other things, which are existential threats in one particular case. I am wary of electric cars.

Where I am absolutely with you is on the public transport fleet and the services. If we clean those up, I think that would be the focus for me for electrification and the incentivisation around it. People will continue to drive private vehicles, absolutely, and if you have or want to drive, electric is marginally better. That is absolutely fine, but it is certainly not a solution in and of itself. We need to be very careful that that is clear.

Q289 Greg Smith: Can I bring Mark in? Off the back of what Chris has just said, there was a very clear steer towards the end of the argument that suggests that private vehicles per se are not a good thing. I could argue with Chris about that for many hours, I think, but we do not have time this morning.

From the rural communities' perspective, that is not a goer of an argument, is it? How do we find a better balance, not just in terms of encouraging people to go active where they can but, equally, not to



castigate them when they cannot? If they were to walk the school run, it would take them a two-and-a-half hour round trip or something like that.

Mark Valleley: I would point to the work that has been initiated by the Department for Transport on the future of rural mobility, which is all about increasing people's choices, particularly in rural areas. We talk about future transport technology, and it potentially offers us new ways for people who have traditionally been reliant on their car to go about their business and do things slightly differently. They are still achieving the outcomes they want—shopping and leisure trips they want to engage in—but doing them differently.

It is the concept of demand-responsive transport. It is something that is more responsive to people's needs, but at the moment we only have the model of the traditional bus service. We need to challenge that and break it down, enabling buses and shared transport to be more responsive to people's needs.

The future mobility work that the DFT has just initiated provides us with a potential mechanism for identifying that. Some national transport bodies are doing an awful lot of work. Midlands Connect has done an awful lot of work in this area to identify how you could provide for more car trips using other forms of transport. There is some really good work going on, and I urge everyone to understand and participate in the work the DFT is initiating to ensure that we get the outcomes we need.

Q290 **Lilian Greenwood:** I have the same question for each of you. What are the most important policies that you want to see in the Government's transport decarbonisation plan?

Dr Norman: I would say this, but my job is walking and cycling. We have seen a huge change from this Government in terms of the amount of walking and cycling and the emphasis on walking and cycling. I think it is one of the few areas where the Mayor and the Prime Minister agree. They both enjoy cycling around the city. The "Gear change" report and work, and the policy area around increasing cycling specifically, is very welcome. It takes a lot from what we have done in London.

There needs to be more emphasis on walking. With "Gear change," the clue is in the title. It is largely focused on cycling. As we heard from Mary Creagh on the work that Living Streets do, walking is very important. We are seeing an increasing demand for that. For me, the issue is political commitment. We know that there is the money and the policy framework to deliver it, and that is beginning to show. It is political commitment at local level and political leadership spreading throughout the whole system that will make the biggest change in getting more people walking and cycling, and getting the infrastructure that we need to deliver that.

Q291 **Lilian Greenwood:** "Gear change" is quite revolutionary. With a lot of it, you look at it and think, "That's fantastic," but some of it is guidance. For example, it talks about segregated cycleways, not shared spaces. Are you



worried that it will not be implemented, even though it is great?

Dr Norman: Yes, I am. I think that is a real problem, and that is exactly why Active Travel England needs to be set up quickly to be able to enforce the quality standards. We have learnt in London that you need quality standards. There is no point spending money on stuff that is not good. If people do not feel safe, they will not use it. It needs quality standards and they need to be adhered to. I think that comes down to regulation from Active Travel England, but also local political leadership. Obviously, the highway authority rests with the local councils and not with the DFT for most of the UK's roads, where this is most important.

Q292 **Lilian Greenwood:** Mark, I can see that you want to come in. What are your priorities for the transport decarbonisation plan? I am guessing that you want to comment on "Gear change" as well.

Mark Valleley: Yes. On "Gear change," I think there is a slight risk that it sets a very high bar in the recent guidance that has come out, with the emphasis on segregating, quite rightly, cyclists from traffic. The slightly greyer area is the segregation of cyclists from pedestrians, which should be a minimum requirement.

I would make a plea for the slightly more historical rural areas of the country rather than the major cities. What we need to be doing there is introducing coherent, comprehensive networks that allow people to make door-to-door journeys, rather than having to have the introduction potentially of cycle superhighways. The sharing of surfaces is going to have to be a component if you want to introduce comprehensive networks in some of our historic towns and cities. You want to try to minimise it, but it will be there. I would not want to see LTN 1/20—the new guidance—being used too prescriptively, to say, "I'm sorry, if the route isn't segregated and pedestrians and cyclists aren't segregated from one another, you can't introduce it," because we will not get the outcome that we want in terms of introducing comprehensive networks of infrastructure. That is the more important thing to do.

To its credit, "Gear change" softens the emphasis slightly. Some of the pictures in "Gear change" are of people using shared surfaces. It is something we must keep a close eye on.

Q293 **Lilian Greenwood:** Chris, what is your priority for the policies that come in the transport decarbonisation plan?

Chris Boardman: First of all, I am going to start by patting the Government on the back. We talked about funding earlier, but, as Mark has alluded to, I think the guidance is more important. Not only that; it might be guidance at the moment, but we are, hopefully, going to adopt LTN 1/20 as a standard to make sure that whatever we build will get used. It is the unpalatable truth that if it is not up to that standard—if it is trying to use canal towpaths—we are not going to make a dent in public transport. The standards are really important.



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It has had a big impact locally, particularly as it affects funding settlements. That is exactly what Government should be doing: “We need to invest in these modes. It has to be to this standard, and we’re going to look at that when we decide what funding to give you.” That is exactly right, so I hope that we will be adopting those standards.

I absolutely agree with Mark about a fully connected network and that we should have a plan for that. The Government’s decision is to tell people what they need to do, and then let locals decide how to do it. That is how it should work.

Q294 Lilian Greenwood: Should the Government introduce targets to reduce car traffic after the pandemic? What would be a realistic target, or should it be different in different areas? Do you have a target in Greater Manchester for reducing car traffic? If you don’t, what would it be or should it be?

Chris Boardman: It has to go down dramatically if we are to meet the 2040 transport strategy. I think it is about a million extra journeys a day, if you combine cycling and walking. Incidentally, as Will said, “Gear change” does not really touch on walking. That is another element that needs to be bolted on, to make sure that it is properly addressed as high quality and is considered a form of transport.

Ultimately—a horrible cliché but it is true—what gets measured gets done. I had a conversation with Will’s predecessor before taking this role. I like targets. They give people accountability, and with every action you can see whether you are getting closer or further away. There is such a big journey. Measure, but measure each scheme. Don’t measure the whole, because it is too big all at once. That is very good advice. Measure the impact of each scheme as it goes in, and that is the way we are addressing targets locally.

Q295 Lilian Greenwood: Is that targets for increasing cycling and walking rather than targets for motorised traffic reduction? Do you have targets for motorised traffic reduction?

Chris Boardman: Not to my knowledge.

Q296 Lilian Greenwood: Would they be helpful?

Chris Boardman: If we get mode shift, that is the point at which we want people to stop doing that and start doing this. We are focused on the incentive rather than the disincentive at the moment.

Q297 Lilian Greenwood: Mark, Will, should there be targets for motorised traffic reduction? If so, what is realistic? What would you be looking for in your area?

Mark Valleley: I cannot see how you could practically do that. You would need different targets for different areas, and there would be horrendous debate about exactly how the target was formulated for a particular area and how you were going to achieve it. I would go with



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Chris's point that it is about targets to increase the proportion of journeys made by cycling and walking, and the shift to public transport. That has to be the focus. I think that is what everyone could get behind.

Traffic reduction targets of the type you are talking about would, picking up on an earlier question, potentially antagonise. You have to take people with you on this journey. It is about emphasising targets around the positives rather than the negatives.

Q298 Lilian Greenwood: Will, should there be a national target for car journey reduction? If the Secretary of State says that we should use our cars less, does it mean anything if he does not tell us where we want to get to?

Dr Norman: In London, we had a target of shifting from 63% of journeys by walking, cycling and public transport, to 80% of journeys by walking, cycling and public transport. That is the positive piece. The inevitable consequence of that is fewer car journeys, so it adds up to 3 million fewer car journeys per day.

We need to go with the positive on this and enable that choice. We know that 5 million car journeys could be easily done by walking, cycling and public transport. We know that not every journey can be and that there are certain trips that cannot be. I think you need a sustainable target, the positive piece, but the inevitable consequence of a shift towards walking, cycling and public transport is a reduction in car use. We need to be cognisant of that and the scale of change we are looking at. That inspires and enables more people to deliver the targets they are reaching for the active travel infrastructure.

Lilian Greenwood: Thank you.

Chair: The next section is about the emergency active travel fund. We have heard about schemes across the country in a positive and indeed negative manner.

Q299 Mr Bradshaw: Perhaps all three of you could give your assessment as to how well the scheme has worked and been implemented in your area. We will start with Chris.

Chris Boardman: We have already touched on it a little bit. In the round, schemes were well intentioned and brave. They recognised that an alternative was needed for public transport for the third of GM residents who do not have a car. In that sense, it was good.

Fast decisions were immediately required by local authorities, who often had little expertise. At the moment, we are not delivering a lot of active travel infrastructure, so the engineers who knew how to do this stuff were not suddenly there, and that led to some poor design. That was combined, in my opinion, with the lack of a requirement for a time limit on schemes. There was money to do them, but when there were objections and local pressure on a local councillor who deals with



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interpersonal things, there was an awful lot of pressure to remove, and there were no constraints to adapt rather than just pull it out. There were a few things that did not work well. Where it worked well in Greater Manchester—the majority of our stuff is heading for permanence—it was already in the works, so we accelerated.

In relation to the active travel measures, we introduced about 20 miles of routes very quickly and several low-traffic neighbourhoods. It worked for us because we were already on the journey and we had the expertise.

Dr Norman: In London, the combined effort of the active travel fund and TfL's work has delivered an astonishing change. One of my colleagues said that more has been delivered in five months than the previous administration did in five years. That is 80-plus kilometres of new and upgraded bike lanes; 90 low-traffic neighbourhoods; and 350 school streets. I think we have relooked at 2,200 traffic lights to give more green man time, or green woman time—we now have green women on some of our traffic lights in London—to cross the road safely. We have 80 kilometres of 24/7 bus lanes, which help public transport.

There has been a huge change. The pace and scale have been nothing short of remarkable. It has brought challenges, and we can talk about that, but I pay tribute to all the officers and design engineers across the city, both TfL and in the boroughs, for being able to deliver this so successfully. It is not easy, but they have the expertise. Chris is an Olympic medal winner. As my boss regularly points out, I am not. You cannot just rock up at the Olympics talking about running or cycling. You need some practice. I think London has had some practice and was able to deliver an Olympic performance when we needed to.

Q300 **Mr Bradshaw:** Mark, what about the rural experience?

Mark Valleley: My take on it is that we have thrown a lot of mud at a wall, and some of it has stuck and some of it has not. I think the pop-up culture that occurred meant that stuff that was easy to do was introduced because of the timeline. They were not necessarily the best things. We were not introducing things that were potentially part of a coherent network for door-to-door journeys. I believe the solution to this is not short-term, pop-up solutions.

I commend the work that has been done on the development of local cycling and walking infrastructure plans. The challenge there is that only half of local transport authorities have them. They are a 10-year investment plan setting out where routes are going to be introduced. The critical thing is the community engagement that will take place to ensure that, when those schemes land, there has been full consultation, as far as possible, so that the views of all the people who are interested in road space and how it is used are taken into consideration. That is the way forward: the longer-term, coherent plan with the longer-term investment that we have heard about. The £2 billion ring-fenced funding for cycling and walking infrastructure is good news.



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Is it enough? We can have a debate about that, but we at least have something that is equivalent to the road investment strategy. We have a five-year anchor, which is really positive. It is moving away from pop-up to a focus on the LCWIPs and some of the money that is coming forward. We must get all local transport authorities having local walking infrastructure plans. That then provides the Government with an objective way of saying, "How much investment do we need to deliver them?" and for the new Active Travel England body to administer it. Let us move from pop-up to something that has a firmer footing over the longer term to deliver meaningful improvements.

Q301 Mr Bradshaw: Can I ask Will and Chris specifically about overcoming local political opposition? In my constituency I have a Conservative county council and a Labour city council working very constructively and effectively together in delivering these schemes, but that is not the case everywhere. I think specifically, Chris, that you had opposition from a Labour political leader in Manchester to some of your schemes. Will, you have the example of Kensington and Chelsea that not only does not have a single segregated cycle route in the whole of the borough, but has recently taken out one of the pop-ups that was very popular with local families taking their children to school. They now have to cycle in the middle of a very busy road.

How can you overcome that opposition, Chris? What powers do you have? What can the Government do to help you force obstructionist and recalcitrant local authorities who are doing nothing and undermining the Government's own strategy?

Chris Boardman: I think Will's answers are likely to be more instructive, so I will keep it very brief. London has a lot more before and after activity. As mentioned earlier, you are 10 years further down the road, and that really became apparent in the last few months.

Ostensibly, what we have tried to do is first of all stop talking about cycling and walking, and talk about what this is actually for around people's homes; what they actually get back in terms of quality of life; and the fact that we joined it up starts to add to our Bee network, which we are trying to produce anyway.

Another element I am personally very keen on is trials. They take away some of the fear. We can say, "Listen, if you're right then we take it out, but if not we'll make it permanent and then maybe we'll go a bit further." That is very important and a very useful element. It is a strategy that we are employing. Will has a lot more examples that I am sure he can share.

Q302 Mr Bradshaw: Will, how are you going to overcome the obstructionism of places like Kensington and Chelsea?

Dr Norman: First of all, Ben, there have been a number of schemes in Kensington and Chelsea where we have been trying to put in segregated cycling on some of the most dangerous roads. We have had fatalities and high numbers of people being killed and injured trying to get around by



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walking and cycling. That is simply wrong; it should not exist, yet the borough is refusing to make changes to the roads where it is the highway authority.

We have frequently had quoted back, "Residents don't want this. People don't want this." I think there is a danger of people listening to those who shout loudest. We all know that social media can be a social echo chamber, and I think probably in Covid even more so. We need to go beyond that.

What we have done in Kensington and Chelsea is a representative sample. You say, "Let's do a statistically valid poll on cycling and walking measures, and what people really think according to their age, their income, their ethnicity and their gender." We found when that actually happened that 70% of people were in favour of better cycling routes and 14% were against; 56% wanted the lane that you mentioned on Kensington High Street and 30% did not; and 58% of people wanted more protected cycling on main roads in that borough.

The first thing is to stop just listening to the loudest, whether they are pro cycling or against cycling, and actually spend time engaging and consulting. I think in Kensington and Chelsea it has become a strategic issue. We are building a network of cycle routes within London. Suddenly, you have a hole opening up in Kensington and Chelsea that goes way beyond just the residents in Kensington and Chelsea; hundreds and thousands of people who live in west London are being put at risk because of the lack of infrastructure in that space.

It is about shifting it from a local highways perspective to a strategic city-wide network perspective. That is where I want to work with the Secretary of State to see what we can do to force the borough to think about making the roads safe for people to walk and cycle, so that kids and teachers can get to school and people can get to the local shops without the risk of being hurt.

Q303 Mr Bradshaw: Why do you or the Government not take over their roads or withhold their transport funding? You give them a lot of money and the Government give them a lot of money, and they are not delivering on the Government's priorities. Keep the money back and take over the roads.

Dr Norman: That will be part of the discussions at the next round of budgets. I do not want money wasted on schemes that are not being delivered.

Secondly, within the powers under the GLA Act, the Mayor has the authority to request permission for a highway authority to shift from a local borough to Transport for London, but it needs the approval of the Secretary of State to do that. At the moment, we are looking at a variety of different legal angles, including that one.



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I know that the borough are remaking that decision in the next week or so, and issued a report yesterday that I have not had time to fully digest. I very much hope that they will relook at that decision and reinstate the safe cycle lanes, so that all the kids you mentioned can safely cycle to school without risk of being hit by a car or a truck.

Mr Bradshaw: Thank you.

Q304 **Chair:** Perhaps I could stay on the fund, very briefly. Mark, from a south-east perspective, or nationally, is it the case with the fund that you have to use it by a certain time or lose it?

Mark Valleley: I believe for the emergency active travel thing it is a short-term funding settlement, but, in the longer term, the £2 billion is there for 10 years, so it provides the potential for a sustained package of investment to ensure that the money is spent.

Q305 **Chair:** Is there a danger that some of these projects are not new ways to open up routes that hitherto you could not cycle and walk on, but are instead being used just to replace paving on an existing pavement? Is that going on?

Mark Valleley: Because of the short-term nature of the funding, your ability to be creative, consult with your communities and develop something like the more comprehensive cycle network that I think you are alluding to will take more time than is currently available with the emergency active travel fund that has come forward. I go back to the LCWIP process and local authorities developing comprehensive cycling and walking plans that they can roll out over an extended period of time. The critical thing with all of this is the community engagement that is necessary to get everybody signed up to it.

The difficulty with the short-term emergency active travel fund was that it was not possible to do that. As a consequence, we have seen some of the knock-back that has happened. Even the second tranche has to be spent by, I think, June 2022. If you are taking a more comprehensive thing—a cycling scheme of the sort I think you are alluding to—to get that designed, consulted on and through all of the process involves quite a lot of risk that you might not spend the money. As a consequence, the level of ambition that some local authorities have been able to show in the timescale has meant that in order to ensure spend they may not have been as adventurous as I think you would like them to be.

Q306 **Chair:** This Committee has been critical before. Pothole funding is a good example. If you have to use it by a certain time, it tends to get wasted rather than properly planned out. It sounds like a similar theme here.

Will, colleagues in the House make the point that around Swiss Cottage they are stuck in the car for a long time and surely that cannot be good for air pollution. When they actually get to the point in question, it is just to extend the pavement a little. Are TfL assessing whether the negatives in terms of air pollution, particularly for people who live in flats near



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those spaces and cannot get out, are outweighed by the positives of active travel?

Dr Norman: Yes. We have a network of air quality monitors across the city that are always monitoring traffic. As I mentioned earlier, where we have seen a shift towards walking and cycling—the famous one is at the Embankment—we have not seen any increase in air pollution. It actually improves.

I do not know the exact details on the Swiss Cottage piece, but I know that at Swiss Cottage we had plans for a cycle route that would have made much better use of that space. It would have allowed people coming from north London into the centre of town on a safe, segregated and protected cycle route, but it was opposed by Westminster City Council. It is a shame because that would have helped to ease the congestion there and given people a cleaner alternative. At the moment, I agree, Swiss Cottage is a pretty unpleasant environment in which to walk or cycle.

Chair: Thanks to you both. You have given really good evidence in terms of how, if these things are not properly planned and given time, they can lead to a difficult space. I am conscious of your time, so we will move to the final section on the overall Government vision for active travel. Just down the road from Chris Boardman, I introduce Robert Largan.

Q307 **Robert Largan:** Thank you, Chair, and good morning to all the witnesses. The Government have said that they aim for half of all journeys in towns and cities to be walked or cycled by 2030. Do you think that target is achievable? What steps are you taking locally to achieve it?

Mark Valleley: It is achievable with the right plan, the right level of investment and the right level of engagement. I know I keep coming back to it, but it is such an important thing; the local cycling and walking infrastructure plans are the way forward to achieve that aspiration. A clear plan enables you to get to a target, making the case for the level of investment needed to get you there. Yes, there is the prospect through the LCWIP process for a sustained level of investment. The commitment is fantastic. We now have a dedicated £2 billion for cycling and walking. It is not that there is £2 billion available from various different pots of money that local authorities have to competitively bid for. There is real evidence of progress in making sure that we get to where we need to be.

Q308 **Robert Largan:** Thanks, Mark. The same question to Will, please.

Dr Norman: In London, we have a slightly different target. As I said, it is to shift to 80% walking, cycling and public transport. From April to June, London almost hit 50%. I think it got to 46 point something per cent. walking and cycling mode share this year itself. I think it is possible, with sustained investment and, as I said, local political will.

I agree with the other witnesses that planning and networks are absolutely vital. Since 2016, in London we have delivered 260 km of



high-quality cycle routes across the city. That is what is leading the massive boom in cycling. We see the same thing with our investments in better crossings and more people cycling, so I think the target is right. It is ambitious but possible with sustained investment and political will; it is also telling stories and bringing people along with us. We have to monitor and capture the evidence. We must see how it is changing people's lives, with the positivity of kids cycling to school or people shopping in local high streets. We need that momentum, and the communications and behaviour change to bring people along with us, coupled with investment in the infrastructure and the political will to change our cities.

Q309 **Robert Largan:** The same question to Chris as well.

Chris Boardman: Fundamentally, yes, of course it is possible, if it is resourced and pursued accordingly. A lot of the details of that have just been discussed; how national Government policy meshes with local government. I am very much in favour of, "Here's the goal—50% by 2030"—and all your transport settlements will reflect your plan to get there. That mobilises local government to create a plan.

As we said, the guidance is excellent. LTN 1/20 needs building on. We need to put in place Active Travel England to go round and speak to people: "Right, here is the mission. How are you achieving it?" All of those things are absolutely moving us in the right direction.

In terms of resources, as I said earlier, the money needs to follow strategy and not the other way around. Having said that, about £6 billion is the rough estimate to do this for the whole country. Those are the kind of numbers. They need to be in perspective as well. I have referenced several times that a single interchange just outside Bedford cost £1.4 billion. Refurbishing Bank tube station cost £1 billion. In context, it is actually not a lot of money, but it is the long-term commitment and the compulsion for all of the country to have to reach an outcome and then attaching that to all transport settlements: "You must make this part of it. You can choose locally how, but you have to do a lot more to activate active travel in your area."

Q310 **Robert Largan:** I have been watching very closely the work you have been doing in Greater Manchester. I represent the Peak District just outside Greater Manchester. I would be interested to know your thoughts on what we can do to try to join up the work that is being done in the cities with the national park and the rural areas. There is a huge number of people who live out in the Peak District who want to cycle into Manchester to go to work. There are lots of people in Greater Manchester who want to cycle out to visit the Peak District. It would be interesting to get your thoughts on that specifically, and on the wider problem of how we can join up the local authority's efforts to encourage cycling with the rural areas surrounding them.

Chris Boardman: The psychology of this is really important. Mark mentioned networks earlier. Network is everything. There is no point in



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having a beautiful piece of expensive bike lane if it has an untenable junction at either end. It will not get used and you will waste your money. Rather than trying to tackle everything at once, go for some corridors and make them work really well. Prove the case and then expand and expand. Gathering evidence, as Will said, is how you take people with you. You create examples that are close to home that people can relate to. They look over there and say, "I want that."

I have already had conversations with some of our neighbours on the borders of Greater Manchester, who say, "Hang on, you've got this plan but it stops at the border." Journeys do not stop at borders. There are conversations that could be had, but I think it is for Government to join them up, and Active Travel England will be a great body to help achieve that.

Lastly, we should not be discussing this without talking about public transport. Cycling and walking—particularly walking—are often the first and last steps of a journey. If the alternatives for a slightly longer journey are not great, if the weather is bad or I have slightly further to go, my first step will be to go to the car. Making active travel a viable alternative is essential to the whole package of public transport.

We should be focusing dramatically on bus now. It is relatively cheap; we can clean it up; and we can do it relatively quickly. That is a partner we are now focused on in Greater Manchester for active travel.

Robert Largan: Thanks, Chris. I completely agree with that point. We are really keen to see much more joined-up public transport, particularly for those who might want to cycle to their local rail station, take the bike into town and then cycle when they are in the city centre. I completely get the point and I appreciate your answer.

It would be remiss of me not to mention that I am a bit starstruck this morning because me and my dad watched you, both as a cyclist and as a pundit for the Tour de France, for many years. Thank you so much for coming.

Chair: I am sorry to interrupt the love-in. Over to Ruth Cadbury, similarly starstruck, I hope.

Ruth Cadbury: I am always starstruck whenever I work with Chris, but also with Will as well.

Chair: And Mark.

Q311 **Ruth Cadbury:** And Mark, but I do not think I have worked with Mark before. I am going to be starstruck now.

This is probably the last question from us, Chair, unless you have one. Chris and earlier witnesses mentioned the £6 billion that is estimated to be needed to make the serious step change towards walking and cycling, but £2 billion has been allocated for walking and cycling over this Parliament.



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Clearly, it is not enough, but is it delivered in the right way? Is the timing right? Is there a way that Government should be funding, as well as funding more?

Chris Boardman: We have already alluded to some of it, so I will re-encapsulate it. It is tying it to the greater transport awards, with Government saying, "Our national policy is that we need to drive less. We are not going to focus on demonising people who drive, which is great. We are going to focus on enabling people to travel differently, So you must do that and that must be part of any proposal you put to us. We won't fund it if you are not moving towards that 50% mode at least." I think that is the right way for Government to interact with local authorities. Local authorities can say how best to get that done in their area, be it with low-traffic neighbourhoods or active neighbourhoods joined up, or segregated bike lanes, but it must be achieved.

Looking at car alternatives, public transport and active travel in the round incentivises local government to get it done. It forms alliances between different boroughs when they all know, "This is our problem and we have to solve it." Doing it or not doing it is no longer a choice. It is a case of how we do it and not whether we should do it. That is where Government can move the dial to make it a requirement. If you just make cash available, it may get used or you might have holes, as Will alluded to in London, when somebody just cannot see it and does not have the vision. That is where Government can step in and require people to join the dots.

Dr Norman: London is in a different situation because a lot of the funding that has delivered the step change in active travel in London has been through TfL, mainly funded through fares; 70% is funded through fares. Obviously, that has been hit badly by Covid, and transport in London now requires Government support. As I said before, the Prime Minister and the Mayor are both agreed on the need for active travel, but doing it in six-monthly tranches it is very hard to plan the delivery of a network. A long-term funding settlement for London will be vitally important.

Overall, the funding package is good. The UK-wide funding package is good, but how it is spent will be key. Spending it on rubbish is going to waste money and will not deliver the outcomes. If it is spent well, and we track the outcomes and show the change it can make, I think in eight years' time—this is a 10-year package—we will have to reassess it. The measures that people want are going to be hugely popular. In my experience, once you put stuff in other people start asking for it: "Why have they got a cycle lane and we haven't? Why can their kids walk to school and my kids can't? Why does that neighbourhood have cleaner air and we haven't? That's not fair." This will have to evolve. It is the right point at this time nationally, but we need to evolve it. I think in the future we will require more money because the public will call for it.



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Mark Valleley: My plea is about the way the money is allocated, and that there is not a competitive bidding process that consumes time and resources. Essentially, we know what we need to do—LCWIPs and developing networks. We have the LTN 1/20 guidance. In a very simple way, if something that a local authority is proposing is to Active Travel England's satisfaction and meets the required standard, there is no reason not to fund it.

In order to make the programme effective, we need to give the local authorities introducing schemes the long-term funding certainty that they need to be able to keep a programme of schemes rolling forward without the need to keep going back every year and bidding, bidding and bidding for money. Then we will have a better chance of getting to where we need to be. It is not just the amount of money; the way it is going to be allocated needs careful consideration. My plea is that it is not a competitive bidding process, and that there are sufficient assurances and controls so that everyone is happy that the right money is going into the right schemes.

Ruth Cadbury: Thank you very much.

Chair: That concludes the session. A huge thank you to Will, Chris and Mark for giving us such comprehensive evidence on active travel and local roads. We wish you all the best. We hope, when we are allowed, that we can come and see some of the exciting projects that you have either delivered or have in the pipeline. Finally, we wish you all the very best during these times. Thank you.