

Written evidence submitted by Bikeability Trust

The Bikeability Trust welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the Public Accounts Committee inquiry on active travel in England, following the National Audit Office (NAO) report.

We regrettably share the NAO's view that the Government's targets to increase cycling and walking by 2025 – as set in its 2nd Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS2) – are now very unlikely to be met. Furthermore, we are highly concerned that the Government risks its manifesto pledge of offering cycle training to every child by 2025, by failing to secure a long term funding settlement for Bikeability enabling expansion.

We also support as a member of the Walking and Cycling Alliance a separate joint submission.

1. Effectiveness of Bikeability

We welcome the NAO's recognition that past studies in Bikeability have shown its proven impact on increasing cycling for children:

- 65% of children cycled since the start of term, after completing Bikeability Level 2 or 3 (SQW, 2019)
- 34% of Year 6 pupils cycled on roads in the past week, a 12% increase (SQW, 2019)

The Trust is about to implement a full monitoring and evaluation framework, designed with Department for Transport, Active Travel England and TRL. Future data collection on the impact of the Bikeability programme will be collected from Autumn 2023 onwards (integrated into the booking process for parents and carers). Impact data collected will include ability of children to ride in accordance with the National Standard for Cycling. It will collect rider's and parent/carer's view on their child's:

- improved confidence and perceived safety,
- propensity to cycle,
- intended frequency and journey-type cycled (pre and post intervention)
- barriers and motivators to cycle,
- attitudes towards cycling
- change in cycle ownership post training

Rider characteristic data (gender, age, ethnicity and SEND) is already collected to understand who is currently accessing/missing out on training. This data collection will give ATE the largest data set on children and parents' attitudes and experiences of cycling through Bikeability.

We will combine this data with the 2019 study on the impact of the Bikeability programme, which found positive, and statistically significant, impacts associated with participating in at least Level 2 Bikeability training on a range of Year 6 pupil outcomes, including cycling rates since the start of term. The proportion of Year 6 pupils in schools that received Bikeability who

cycled since the start of term was statistically significantly greater (65%) than the proportion in comparison schools (56%). In addition, Bikeability was associated with a positive impact on the proportion of Year 6 pupils who had cycled on roads in the past week (34% compared with 22% in comparison schools).

The positive impact of cycling on an individual’s health from childhood to adulthood is significant and research highlights the advantage that can be gained by embedding cycling habits, education and influence from an early age.¹ Ensuring that the current generation of children are well-equipped to pursue cycling as a lifelong habit will better enable their successors to adopt similar habits.

2. Impact of Funding Uncertainty

The last round of funding applications made by Local Highways Authorities for multi-year Bikeability funding was 2016, which granted funding to 2020. Since then, we have only secured one year extension of funding, confirmed just prior to the financial year starting.

Bikeability is delivered via a complex supply chain of registered training providers and instructors. The funding is a contribution only, and many LHA’s need to find contributions to meet the shortfall from a variety of sources including parental contributions and other LHA funding streams.

We analysed the level of match funding provided by LHA’s from the 2016 original bids, and a selection of grant recipients have sent in recent data. An average of 28% is being provided to support Bikeability delivery. This is made up of:

Contributions	In Kind Costs
Scheme management (officer / admin time)	Training venues
Parent / school charging	Equipment
Recruitment of instructors	Promotion / communication support

Table : Contributions made by grant recipients

In 2023/24 terms, as we are currently distributing £ 18,777,506.00, if contributions remain at the same level 28% it means LHA’s are required to match fund or find contributions to the value of **£5,257,701**.

Local Highways Authorities are not able to move quickly in agreeing grant terms and contracts. Procurement requires a signed grant letter 5 months in advance so this can go through due process. We estimate that every year LHA’s lose around a whole week of officer time to procurement exercises. The annual cost of this would be around **£90,000**² in staff time.

¹ deBrujin et al (2009) ‘Adult active transportation; Adding habit strength to the theory of planned behaviour’ American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 36(3) pp 189-194

² Based on all current grant recipients requiring a week of Officer time (average salary FTE £30,000 per annum)

We estimate that as a result of delays in confirming funding to the end of the financial year the risk of under-delivery at the biggest peak time (April to July) means 20% of Level 1&2 and Level 2 places risk being non-delivery. In 2022/23 terms that would have meant 69,985 Level 1&2 and Level places at risk. The total cost of these places would have been £3,149,325.

We estimate that there is a direct cashable saving to Government / Local Government of 2.8% to offer a multi-year settlement, as well as increased ability to meet expansion plans. We have modelled plans of expansion for DfT since 2021.

3. Equality of Delivery

As a result of not offering our long term expansion modelling, we continue to have a postcode lottery of delivery. The planning assumption in the NAO report, that 'every child' means 80% of Year 6 children completing our Level 2 on the road course, means for some areas a significant scale up, where Local Highways Authorities have showed low capability and low ambition. For example in yet unpublished 2022/23 figures:

- 100% of Year 6 children in Solihull were offered and received Bikeability
- 14% of Year 6 children in Medway were offered and received Bikeability

Delays to sufficient and long term funding will significant hamper ability to scale up equitably. Whilst we have a minimum settlement offer for 2023-24, we are now facing rapid scale up to meet the manifesto commitment.

4. Adult Cycle training

Currently we do not hold responsibility for the distribution and impact of adult cycle training funding. Funds are held at LHA level from a variety of sources including Capability Funding from DfT and Access fund. There are no published collated figures of £ spent, numbers training or outcomes achieved. No standard reporting, monitoring and evaluation exists. However, there is only one register of qualified cycle training instructors, and this is held by the Bikeability Trust. It is our position that the administration of adult cycle training should be held by us so that we can apply the same level of reporting rigor to show effectiveness of public investment.

Finally

In order to meet the manifesto commitment to train every child, Bikeability requires investment of a minimum of £25.2million in 2023/24 and £29.7million in 2024/25.

We agree with the Walking and Cycling Alliance group that to ensure stability and certainty of Cycling and Walking Investment Strategies in the future, the following is required:

- higher levels of investment (and multi-year)
- sustained funding
- non-competitive bidding
- not funding through multiple small pots (35 different pots mentioned)
- adequate resourcing of evaluation and monitoring

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