

## Written evidence submitted by University of Central Lancashire

### Select committee evidence:

Cycling research projects developed at UCLan in Preston over several years to encourage everyday cycling, have been funded internally by the [Research Centre for Applied Sport Physical Activity](#) and Performance and the [Institute of Citizenship, Society and Change](#). Research includes the following, projects some of which are still ongoing. The findings of these projects have not as yet been published elsewhere.

Research project: survey and focus groups with children, parents and school teachers in Preston about their experiences of cycling commuting to school

Celebration of cycling event at local primary school (See Appendix 1)

Study tour of Local Authority/Council staff and 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisation to the city of Leicester to find out more about cycling in Leicester

Research project: focus group/evaluation with Year 9 school children in Lancashire regarding their experience of cycle training/route planning

Barriers and facilitators to cycling to school for children in the UK: A systematic review: (currently under review)

Local and county level surveys about cycling and cycling infrastructure

Knowledge exchange programme with cycling training provider

### Summary<sup>1</sup> of issues we believe are relevant to the Select Committee

Busy roads, lack of infrastructure and segregated cycle lanes and paths. This is a major and significant barrier to cycling amongst the children and adults we have been in contact with. In Preston and wider Lancashire. In Preston the [Guild Wheel](#) provides a circuit around the outskirts of the city. There are developments currently taking place to provide improved cycle routes into the city.

Local cycling routes are not always well signposted or accessible and can be confusing for novice cyclists and other road users. In Preston everyday cycling is supported by [Climate Action Preston](#) – the project, Preston Pedals offers a repair and training scheme and has recently received additional short term funding from Lancashire County Council to lead bike rides and provide adult cycle training

Study tour to Leicester: The e bike scheme and wider infrastructure changes we observed in Leicester during the study tour clearly showed that leadership from the Mayor was crucial. The Mayor and their team led a strong vision for cycling in Leicester making small changes to routes and infrastructure on an ongoing basis over several years. The participant feedback on the study tour

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<sup>1</sup> Note: Much of this evidence comes from our work in Preston and some from the wider Local Authority area of Lancashire as indicated

recognised that wholesale cultural transformation, widespread community engagement and coproduction was needed to encourage everyday cycling and reduce car use for short journeys.

### **Road safety, infrastructure and parental fears**

In all of our discussions with parents, they expressed fears about their children cycling related to car drivers, and busy roads with no safe segregated spaces. Making cycling much more visible in the infrastructure would be helpful as would permanent reallocation of spaces for cycles rather than cars. The key findings of our systematic review mirror existing evidence that poor infrastructure, roads being very busy with cars, and driver knowledge and awareness of cycling contribute to low uptake of everyday cycling. Access to and storage of bikes for families on low income is also problematic. Old housing stock in the deprived wards of Preston do not have sufficient space for safe cycle storage and there is no localised secure community cycle storage space.

### **Children's cycling commuting (cycling to/from school)**

Our research has found that school active travel plans are not joined up and do not facilitate cycling, for instance there is a lack of storage/safe places for bikes on school premises. In addition, parents make multi modal journeys where they drop off /pick up children as part of another car journey – i.e., to/from work and do not believe that they have sufficient time for cycling. In one secondary School in Lancashire where we talked about cycling to school, we found that free school buses deter children from cycling. We are not aware of evidence that cycle training for children in Schools leads them to cycle to/from School.

### **Cycle training in the community**

There are several small organisations commercial and community which provide cycling training to adults and to children, commissioned by the Local Authority (e.g., Bikeability, Sofa to Saddle). There are also community cycling groups that offer training at a low cost or for free. We are working with a local cycling training provider supporting their data collection and evaluation measures in relation to the outcomes of their cycling training provision. Recently the organisation has developed their evaluation, measures to include questions for participants about continuing cycling post training and health/wellbeing impacts of the training.

- Cycle training is low paid many staff are on term time only contracts
- The voluntary schemes requires volunteers to train cyclists and lead bike rides
- Bikeability training whilst welcome as it equips children with essential cycling skills, the standard provision does not include level 3 route planning and cycling on roads
- There does not appear to be sector led or national government investment in media and marketing campaigns which focus on everyday cycling
- Cycle to work scheme: There is no research we are aware of as to whether this encourages every cycling it is to all intents and purposes a tax deduction scheme

### **Communities cycling**

In a recent survey of Lancashire residents when asked “What would make you consider starting to cycle or cycling more frequently?”, the highest ranked option was “Better cycle lanes protected (me) from other traffic.”, followed by, “Reducing the amount of traffic on the roads in my neighbourhood”. Cycle training and bike maintenance courses were valued but not seen as less of a priority in encouraging cycling.

For all purposes (commuting, escorting, leisure, etc.) the proportion of men cycling is much higher than for women, more than double in all cases, but for commuting and leisure it is three to four times the level. This is a long-standing observation in cycling research and is generally accepted to be a reflection of women being more risk adverse when cycling (particularly as they are more likely to be supervising children). Women, and many of our diverse communities are poorly served in terms of investment in their cycling, with one off schemes and voluntary initiatives which do not provide continued support, mentoring and coaching.

In a separate survey about the recently constructed segregated cycle lane between Penwortham and Preston centre, there was general agreement that improved safety for cycling, especially those travelling with children. However, discontinuity was mentioned by a number of respondents, particularly the final section connecting with the main city centre where cyclists had to re-join motorised traffic. Around a half of respondents saw the introduction of cycle lanes as increasing opportunities for cycling, healthy exercise and improving road safety.

It is clear that improving safety has to be paramount if more people are to consider active travel. On busier roads this requires segregation from motorised traffic and on quieter roads reducing both traffic speeds and levels. There also needs to be a greater degree of continuity in the development of cycle routes, a complete network rather than piecemeal (installed where it needs to be, rather than where it is easy to do), so that new and inexperienced cyclists feel safe and can travel from origin to destination with confidence.

## **Knowledge exchange**

## **Conclusions**

Focus on future investment:

- Women are more risk adverse than men and so cycle less and as they are significant in terms of undertaking local trips and school commutes, investment should be targeted here.
- Desired routes – where people want to cycle – in depth and localised consultations and engagement with communities who live in areas where cycling/road transport schemes are planned. Consultations very often focuses on cyclists and not on people who would cycle if barriers were addressed
- Further strategic and local investment is needed for behaviour change and cycling incentive schemes
- Continuation and expansion of cycling infrastructure schemes which reclaim spaces used by cars for cyclists and other road users.

*Without a significant and sustained investment, public awareness campaigning and prioritisation of these areas we do not believe that the current targets for increasing cycling and walking will be met.*

## Appendix 1. Cycling celebration report



Cycling celebration  
event report final.pdf

**July 2023**