

A response from Cycling UK to the Transport Committee's inquiry on ZERO EMISSION VEHICLES AND ROAD PRICING

Introduction

Cycling UK was founded in 1878 and has over 70,000 members. Historically known as 'CTC' or the 'Cyclists' Touring Club', Cycling UK's central charitable mission is to make cycling a safe, accessible, enjoyable and 'normal' activity for people of all ages and abilities. Our interests cover cycling both as a form of day-to-day transport and as a leisure activity, which can deliver health, economic, environmental, safety and quality of life benefits, both for individuals and society.

We strongly welcome this inquiry. We recognise that is prompted by concerns that replacing petrol and diesel with electrically-powered vehicles, though environmentally beneficial, will deprive the Treasury of fuel duty revenue. However the question is not simply how to replace this revenue, but how to do so in a way that is politically acceptable and which, crucially, supports the wider aims of transport decarbonisation and motor traffic reduction.

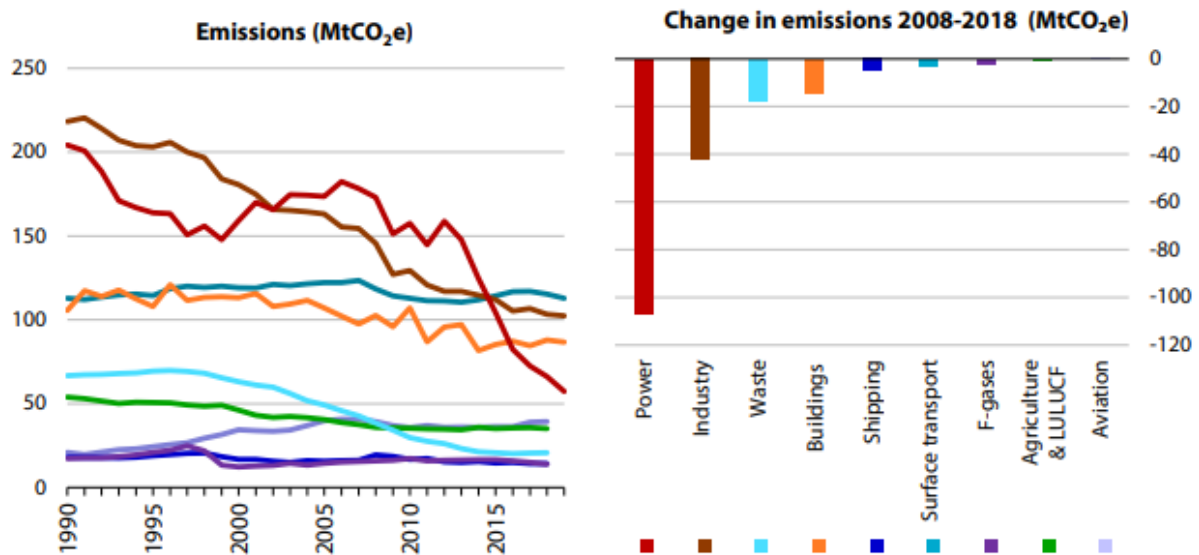
We propose 3 recommendations:

- **The objectives of any package of pricing mechanisms should tackle both the local and the global impacts of motor traffic.** The package should therefore include mechanisms both for tackling local traffic problems (primarily congestion and pollution in urban areas) and for reducing overall road traffic demand (notably to tackle climate change).
- **The revenues from this policy package should be hypothecated to support healthy and sustainable transport options.** By helping both to reduce demand for private motorised travel, while also supporting alternatives, the package can be presented as increasing or improving the alternative options available for some journeys, as well as reducing congestion for those journeys that still need to be made by road.
- **The Government should support the uptake of electrically assisted pedal cycles (or 'e-bikes'), as well as electrically powered motor vehicles. It should provide a general e-bike subsidy scheme, complemented by more targeted support for people with health conditions or disabilities.** It makes no sense that the Government's [Office For Zero Emission Vehicles](#) (OZEV) supports the purchase of electric cars, motorbikes, taxis, vans and lorries, but not e-bikes. Our proposals consider how this support can best be targeted to those who's health and well-being could most benefit from taking up cycling, but who would be least likely to do so without support.

1. Reducing road traffic demand, supporting healthy and sustainable transport

Global impacts

The Government's Transport Decarbonisation Plan, which is now expected in Spring 2021, was preceded by the publication last March of '[Decarbonising Transport: setting the challenge](#)'. Cycling UK strongly welcomed its 6-point vision for a zero-emissions transport system, and particularly its stated aim that: "*Public transport and active travel will be the natural first choice for our daily activities. We will use our cars less...*"



Greenhouse gas emissions by sector 1990-2018 (source: [Committee on Climate Change \(2020\)](#), p72)

The UK's territorial emissions of CO₂ in 2018 (i.e. excluding international aviation and shipping) amounted to 365.7Mt. Transport accounted for 136.8Mt of CO₂ emissions by end user, i.e. 37.4% of all domestic CO₂ emissions. Road transport was responsible for 123.3Mt of CO₂ emissions (i.e. 90% of total domestic transport emissions, and 33% of all territorial emissions). Cars accounted for 74.8Mt of these emissions.¹

While other sectors (notably energy) have made good progress in reducing greenhouse gases, the transport sector's emissions have changed little since 1990. Transport's share of total greenhouse gas emissions (by end user) has therefore [increased steadily](#), from 18% in 1990 to 31% in 2018.²

In a [briefing for Friends of the Earth](#) (published in 2019), consultancy Transport for Quality of Life (TQL) estimated that, to be on course for a 'net zero' economy by 2045 (i.e. 5 years before the Government's subsequently-adopted target date), motor traffic will need to be reduced by 2030 by at least 20% – and by up to 60% under more pessimistic assumptions about how quickly we can decarbonise our vehicles and their power supply. Cycling UK is pleased that the Government has since opted to [bring forward the date for ending the sale of petrol and diesel cars to 2030](#). However, there are several reasons why we also need fewer cars, not just newer cars.

Other impacts

Other compelling reasons to reduce our dependence on motorised travel include:

- *Congestion*: This is estimated to cost the UK economy [£30 billion a year](#).³
- *Air pollution*: Pollution, particularly nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) is estimated to contribute to [between 28,000 and 36,000 early deaths annually](#) in the UK,⁴ at an [economic cost of £20bn or more](#).⁵ Road transport is a substantial contributor to these deaths. The UK Government has faced several [successful legal challenges](#) over its failure to reduce pollution to within legal limits.⁶

¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/875508/final-greenhouse-gas-emissions-tables-2018.xlsx, table 20.

² www.gov.uk/government/statistics/final-uk-greenhouse-gas-emissions-national-statistics-1990-to-2018, table 19.

³ www.clearview-intelligence.com/blog/were-jamming-and-not-in-a-good-way-the-cost-of-congestion-on-the-uks-roads-is-30-billion

⁴ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/734799/COMEAP_NO2_Report.pdf

⁵ www.replondon.ac.uk/projects/outputs/every-breath-we-take-lifelong-impact-air-pollution

⁶ www.clientearth.org/government-loses-third-air-pollution-case-judge-rules-air-pollution-plans-unlawful

- *Road danger*: 1,782 people were killed and another 158,596 were reported as injured (25,484 of them seriously) on Britain's roads in 2018. The economic costs of these casualties was estimated to be [£35bn](#).⁷
- *Physical inactivity*: Around [11.8m women and 8.3m men are insufficiently active](#) to meet recommended guidelines.⁸ Physical inactivity increases the risks of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, colon cancer, dementia, fractures and depression, while increasing all-cause mortality by 30%. It is estimated to cost the UK [£7.4bn annually](#).⁹

In response to the Government's recent consultation on its Transport Decarbonisation Plan, [Cycling UK's response](#) (see [full](#) and [summary](#) versions)¹⁰ therefore calls for policies that:

- Reduce travel overall – e.g. by investing in broadband to reduce the need to travel for business meetings etc;
- Reduce the lengths of journeys – e.g. by planning and locating new developments such that housing, employment and retail opportunities are closer to one another (i.e. “destination shifting”); and
- Enable people to switch from car travel to healthier and more sustainable alternatives (i.e. “mode shifting”).

We note that the Scottish Government has recently proposed setting a target to [reduce car traffic by 20% by 2030](#) (based on 2019 levels).

Overall demand reduction: fuel duty

In terms of tackling greenhouse gas emissions, the most important policy tool is fuel duty, as it relates directly to fuel consumption and thus to CO₂ emissions.

Fuel duty has been frozen each year since 2011. As a result, pump prices were [estimated to be 13% lower in 2018](#) than they otherwise would have been. Road traffic was therefore 4% higher – resulting in an extra 4.5m tonnes of CO₂ emissions (as well as increased NO_x and PM_{10s}) – while public transport use was between 1.3% and 3.9% lower. It also cost the Treasury around £46bn in lost fuel duty revenue over that period.

Paradoxically though, success in decarbonising transport could worsen this loss of fuel duty revenue, by [between £9bn and £23bn](#) compared with the Treasury's projections.

Local demand reduction: Private non-residential or workplace parking levies

Nottingham City Council has applied a workplace parking levy since 2012, which has [successfully restrained traffic](#), while also yielding funding for the city's tram system. However, a wider-ranging levy on all private non-residential parking (e.g. including out-of-town superstores as well as business parks) could be even more effective in reducing demand for travel to car-dependent locations, while also giving councils a means of reviving their high streets. Incentivising people to make more local journeys would in turn boost walking, cycling and public transport use.

Other measures for reducing demand or generating revenues for sustainable transport

A Transport for Quality of Life (TQL) [report for Friends of the Earth](#) found that:

- Charging an ‘[eco levy](#)’ for urban driving in Britain could raise £8bn annually;

⁷ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/833803/ras60004.ods

⁸ www.bhf.org.uk/informationsupport/publications/statistics/physical-inactivity-report-2017

⁹ www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-applying-all-our-health/physical-activity-applying-all-our-health#why-promote-physical-activity-in-your-professional-practice

¹⁰ www.cyclinguk.org/blog/decarbonising-transport-being-led-science

- An ‘eco levy’ for driving on England’s Strategic Road Network (i.e. its motorways and trunk roads) could yield another £5bn;
- A distance-based HGV charge aimed at recouping the costs which HGVs impose on society could yield around £7bn annually;
- The adoption of Land Value Capture for housing (i.e. allowing local authorities to assemble land for housing by buying it at ‘existing use value’, rather than allowing landowners to gain windfall profits from the future increases in the value of their land once developed) would yield around £11bn annually;
- A local payroll levy (similar to the ‘[Versement Transport](#)’ levy in France) could yield up to £7bn annually;
- A visitor lodging levy in Britain, based on a flat rate of £2 per overnight stay, could yield £1bn a year;
- A land value uplift levy (i.e. allowing local authorities to raise funds for transport projects by taxing existing landowners based on the increase in the value of their land following the transport project) could yield substantial sums. For instance, a TfL study of the potential for land uplift relating to 8 proposed transport schemes in London worth £36bn could unlock land for development worth £24bn, while adding £63bn to the value of existing properties nearby.

Public acceptability

Since 2007, there has been a sea-change in the public’s willingness to support road user charging – though there are entirely understandable concerns that it should be done for the right reasons.

In December 2020, Ipsos Mori [surveyed](#) the public’s willingness to support schemes “*that charge road users to drive in and around certain towns and cities ... to reduce congestion and improve the local environment ... or to invest in transport*”. The overall result was that 62% supported these schemes in principle (with 25% supporting them strongly), while only 21% opposed them (8% strongly). These levels of support changed little if only car drivers’ opinions were considered: 60% voiced support and only 22% were opposed.

These results are markedly different to what Ipsos Mori found when it asked the same questions in 2007. At that time, support was just 33% (compared with 62% now), and opposition was 48% (it is now only 21%).

However support in principle for these schemes could be increased, or reduced, depending on how the revenues were raised. The 2020 survey found that support dropped from 62% to 39% (and opposition increased from 21% to 34%) if the revenues were returned to the road user through lower ‘road tax’ [*sic*]. Conversely, support increased, and opposition fell, if the revenues were used to improve public transport (64% support, 17% opposition), tackle climate change (63% support, 17% opposition), or improve air quality (65% support, 14% opposition). Support was maximised (69%, with just 14% opposed) if higher charges were levied on the most polluting vehicles.

Former Chancellor George Osborne decided to [hypothesize the revenues from vehicle excise duty to support road building](#). The Ipsos Mori data suggest that there would be significantly higher public support for using road user charging revenues (however they were raised) to support sustainable transport instead.

The Government should adopt a package of traffic restraint measures that seeks to reduce demand for both longer-distance and urban travel, thereby aiming to tackle both the local and global impacts of motorised traffic, while earmarking the proceeds to improve the provision of (and support the use of) healthy and sustainable alternatives.

2. Boosting access to pedal cycles, including ‘e-bikes’

In July 2020, the Government issued ‘[Gear Change](#)’, its vision for the future of cycling and walking. Cycling UK strongly supports its vision (though we remain concerned that the Government has allocated only a fraction of the funding needed to achieve its admirable objectives). One of its commitments was to “*Establish a national electrically-assisted bike support programme.*” It noted, correctly, that e-bikes “*are particularly useful for people who, for example, need to ride in business clothes without breaking sweat, or to ride up hills, or to travel long distance, who are older or less fit, or who are otherwise put off by the physical effort of an ordinary bike. As such, they could be hugely important in our goal of bringing non-traditional groups to cycling including older and disabled people.*”

So far though, no funding has been announced for this, nor any details of how the scheme will work, nor any timescales for implementing it.

The European market for e-bikes [grew nearly 12-fold](#) from 2006 to 2014 (from 98K to 1,139K units annually). Yet the UK’s [e-bike market](#) is very under-developed, compared with countries like the Netherlands (where e-bikes account for 21% of bike sales) or Belgium (50% of sales). Hence there is a very strong case for the Government to support increased use of e-bikes as part of the its Industrial, Clean Growth and Clean Air strategies.

Projects to promote e-bike use have been shown not only to increase cycle use but also to reduce car use, and hence pollutant emissions. Initial feedback from [demonstration projects](#) run by the charity CoMoUK (previously known as Carplus Bikeplus) found that that 46% of participants were using e-bikes for regular trips that they had previously made by car or taxi. A separate [e-bike hire project in Brighton](#) found that participants reduced their car use by an average of 20% during the project. These results match findings of reduced car-use from other e-bike projects in the [UK and the Netherlands](#), [Norway](#), [Switzerland](#), [Australia](#) and [California](#).

Taken together these studies also indicate that:

- People are willing to use e-bikes for longer and/or hillier trips than they would be willing to make using conventional bicycles;
- Their additional speed means they can compete with cars on journey times over longer distances than conventional bicycles can;
- For drivers wishing to reduce their car use, e-bikes are in many ways a preferable alternative to e-cars. They cost less to operate, they provide additional health and (in many cases) time-saving benefits, they are easier to store (avoiding the need to find and pay for parking spaces), and their batteries are easier to charge.
- ‘Try-before-you-buy’ schemes are highly effective for boosting cycle use, especially among groups who would otherwise not consider cycling, e.g older people, health patients and people with disabilities.

The Government’s [Office for Zero Emissions Vehicles](#) (OZEV) provides generous subsidies for the uptake of electric cars and vans, but no support for e-bikes other than cargo-bikes. This is despite evidence that, per pound spent, subsidising e-bike purchases is [at least twice as cost-effective as electric car subsidies](#) as a way to reduce CO₂ emissions. It would also deliver reductions in congestion, road danger and physical inactivity that cannot be achieved by supporting electric cars.

It is however worth considering how a general e-bike purchase subsidy could be complemented by a more targeted support package, including ‘try before you buy’ schemes e.g. for health patients and/or people with disabilities. This could be done by providing more generous support for people who are registered as disabled and/or receive disability welfare

benefits, or who are recommended to take up cycling as a form of ‘exercise on referral’ by their GP.

This last point potentially links the proposal with another commitment in ‘Gear Change’, namely *“to work more closely with the NHS, incentivising GPs to prescribe cycling”*. This will involve *“deliver[ing] personalised care to incentivise GPs to prescribe cycling wherever appropriate. A stock of cycles would be available to lend, with training, access to cycling groups and peer support; in some cases, if they used them enough, patients would be allowed to keep them”*.

This could have been a description of Cycling UK’s ‘Cycling for Health’ and ‘Community Cycle Clubs’ programmes:

- *Community Cycle Clubs* (www.cyclinguk.org/community-cycle-clubs) are run in partnership with a wide variety of community groups, whether for women, health patients, people with disabilities or other disadvantaged groups. They offer longer-term support for people interested in taking up cycling, for whatever reason. They can often be formed in the aftermath of a Big Bike Revival project. We have set up over 200 clubs in England and Scotland, which have attracted 50,000 participants. Half of them were women, 53% are from the most deprived three deciles of neighbourhoods, 56% are from BAME backgrounds and 50% of attendees are non-regular cyclists on joining. 20% of participants have a disability or long-term health condition and 30% are inactive, meaning they were not doing 30 minutes of exercise per week prior to joining the club.
- Our *Cycle for Health* project (www.cyclinguk.org/community-outreach/health) is a potential prototype of how the Government’s ‘social prescribing’ scheme could work. It has been run through 8 ‘cycling hubs’ throughout West Yorkshire, with support from the West Yorkshire Combined Authority. It enables people with inactivity-related physical and mental health conditions to take up cycling as part of a sociable and supportive group. The majority of participants are now referred to the programme by local health professionals. Of the programme’s 270 direct beneficiaries in its first year, 56% were from recognised areas of deprivation with 31% coming from the highest decile of deprivation. 78% were female and 28% identified as being of non-white ethnicity. 90% were previously non-cyclists, yet 68% were still cycling regularly (i.e. more than once a week) 6 weeks after the programme had ended. Participants said they felt more confident, more relaxed, closer to other people, better able to think clearly and deal with problems, and more optimistic about the future.

We therefore urge the Government to consider a general e-bike subsidy scheme, complemented by more targeted support for people who are either registered disabled or who receive disability welfare payments, or who receive a referral from their GP to take part in a cycling on prescription scheme.

Finally, cargo-bikes, particularly electric-assisted cargo-bikes also have the potential to replace vans, particularly for ‘last-mile’ goods deliveries in urban areas. The EU-wide [Cyclelogistics project](#) (to which Cycling UK contributed) found that [51% of motor-vehicle trips](#) in EU towns involving the transport of goods could be accomplished by cargo bikes.

We therefore strongly urge the Government to reconsider OZEV’s remit, tasking it with providing support for e-bikes as well as electric cars, vans and other vehicles.

Roger Geffen
Policy Director, Cycling UK

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