

Bristol Walking Alliance

campaigning to improve Bristol's walking environment

Response to Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy consultation

The Bristol Walking Alliance (BWA) is a new consortium of organisations campaigning to make Bristol the best city for walking in the world. We want to create a pedestrian environment that is welcoming, safe, convenient and inclusive.

BWA came about because walking, despite being near-perfect exercise from a public health perspective, is neglected as a transport mode in popular images, government funding and workplace travel plans. When walking does get featured, it is under the label of 'walking and cycling', with greater attention given to the cycling element.

BWA members include Living Streets, Sustrans, Bristol Ramblers, Road Peace, Bristol Civic Society, SHINE (Supporting Healthy Inclusive Neighbourhood Environments) health integration team with Bristol Health Partners, Transport for Greater Bristol, and various Neighbourhood Partnerships in Bristol.

We are pleased to respond to the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy.

General comments

1) An integrated approach to mobility

While we are pleased to see attention given specifically to walking, we are concerned that a separate CWIS might contribute to a marginalisation of walking (and cycling). It is more important that all transport planning, guidance and investment, and spatial planning, reflects walking's place at the top of the hierarchy. Cities, in particular, need an integrated approach to mobility. Any document on walking strategy or investment should recognise this.

2) Targets for walking

There should be clear targets for walking (e.g. the Government's existing target of 55% of children walking to school by 2025, a similar target for adults walking to work).

3) Insufficient funding

We are concerned that, at present, the protection and improvement of the walking environment does not receive an appropriate share of total transport and environment spending. The amount of government funding described by CWIS is insufficient. There remains a huge imbalance in the level of

investment for the different transport modes, and the health, wellbeing and economic benefits of walking and cycling are not being recognised.

4) Ensuring and demonstrating that sufficient funding is devoted to walking

We want transport expenditure on improving the walking environment to be clearly identified.

We recognise however that much funding for walking infrastructure will continue to come off the back of other expenditure not labelled for walking, eg general highway expenditure (capital and maintenance), infrastructure expenditure to support public transport, Local Growth Fund. It is important that a specified proportion of these sorts of funding should be devoted to improving walking infrastructure. We recognise that it may be difficult to meaningfully separate walking expenditure from other aspects of many transport schemes, but some attempt should be made to ensure that the level of investment reflects walking's place at the top of the hierarchy, and to demonstrate this transparently.

The money itemised in the consultation paper specifically for walking and cycling is spread across a large number of funding pots, which makes it difficult to see the big picture. The consultation document does not help you see that big picture. It is also difficult to get a picture of the mix between grant funding and devolved funding. The package of funding needs simplifying or presented better - perhaps there should be a smaller number of funding pots, with less detailed restrictions for local authorities on how the money should be spent.

Answers to the consultation questions

Question 1

The Government would be interested to hear views on the approach and actions set out in section 8 of this strategy

We welcome many of the proposed actions in Section 8, as far as they go. In all these actions and generally, it is important to recognise that the interests of walking and cycling do not always coincide, and that appropriate attention should therefore be given to walking as such. As an example, there should be separate specialists to represent walking and cycling on any steering group.

Question 2

The Government would be interested to hear views on the potential roles of national government departments, local government, other public bodies, businesses and the voluntary sector in delivering the strategy and what arrangements could best support partnership working between them

Local transport investment must be locally driven. National government is responsible for the enabling legal framework and for the distribution of a substantial proportion of the finance. Beyond that, we believe that national government should recognise the health, wellbeing and economic benefits of walking and cycling, and should actively encourage local authorities to consider the transformational steps being taken in the increasing number of European cities that are seeking to follow in the footsteps of the likes of Amsterdam and Copenhagen.

We believe that a multiplicity of short-term (and often short-notice) and inflexible funding streams is not an efficient way of effecting change. We also believe that the criteria for allocating national funding should be sophisticated enough to take account of this broad view of benefits.

We believe that there is some scope for avoiding duplication by local authorities if the government were to develop national policies and design guidance. For example, the government could endorse TfL's Streets toolkit.

Question 3

The Government would be interested to hear suggestions and evidence of innovative projects and programmes which could be developed to deliver the objectives outlined in Section 4

Question 4

The Government would be interested to hear your views on how to increase cycling and walking in typically under-represented groups (for example women, older people, or those from black, Asian or minority ethnic backgrounds)

In answer to both questions 3 and 4, examples in Bristol include:

- the Walk for Health programme, which has prioritised socially deprived areas and groups;
- Living Streets' Walk once a Week and Free Your Feet projects with primary and secondary schools;
- the neighbourhood approach pioneered by Let's Walk Bedminster;
- Bristol Walk Fest, the UK's largest urban celebration of walking, which includes walks/activities targeting under-represented groups.

Question 5

The Government would be interested to hear views on what type of assistance Local Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships would find beneficial to support development of ambitious and high standard Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans

As noted above, we believe that cities should be encouraged to consider transformational changes, and that the provision of information (eg design guidance and case studies) by government would add to the credibility of such developments. We have also given our views about funding streams under Q2 above.