

Transport Select Committee submission on cycle safety

Brake, the road safety charity

About Brake

Brake is an independent charity working across the UK to make roads safer, prevent road death and injury, and care for road crash victims. Brake carries out research into public attitudes, experiences and behaviour in relation to road safety, disseminates international research to road safety and fleet professionals, engages schools and communities to spread road safety education, runs public awareness and policy campaigns nationally and supports communities campaigning for road safety. It is also a national, government-funded provider of specialist support for people bereaved and seriously injured in road crashes, running a national helpline and providing information packs that are handed to bereaved families by police following every road death.

For more information contact Ellen Booth, senior campaigns officer, on ebooth@brake.org.uk, t: 01484 559909, Brake, PO Box 548, Huddersfield HD1 2XZ

Response

Increased levels of cycling and walking provide significant health, environmental, economic, and community benefits, but road danger poses a major barrier to active travel. Brake's own research suggests 35% of people could be convinced to commute by bike if routes were safer¹. Road danger creates a barrier not only to people choosing walking and cycling as a transport choice to get from A to B, but also to people, particularly children and families, simply being able to 'get out and about' and walk and cycle in their neighbourhood for leisure, exercise and social reasons. A 2012 Brake survey found many children are prevented from walking and cycling due to parents' fears for their safety². Conversely, studies show that where measures are implemented to offer greater protection and safe passage for people on foot and bike, it can lead to significant rises in walking and cycling^{3,4}.

If the government and local authorities want to increase levels of cycling, which is good for health and the environment, they must make improving safety for vulnerable road users a priority. Brake argues that improving safety for cyclists and pedestrians goes hand-in-hand, and advocates a holistic and ambitious approach from government towards safer streets, communities and routes for walking *and* cycling.

Evidence shows that slowing down traffic makes cycling (and walking) on roads safer⁵. It also shows that the safest way to cycle is on a path segregated from traffic⁶. Brake therefore recommends that in towns, cities and villages, traffic should be slowed to a maximum speed limit of 20mph to allow people to get out and about and make journeys by bike and on foot (and by a combination of walking or cycling and public transport). Brake also calls for greatly increased provision of dedicated traffic-free or segregated routes for cycling (and walking), particularly on key routes linking residential areas with schools and colleges, places of work, shopping areas and leisure facilities, and linking neighbouring towns. Evidence from the Netherlands⁷, London⁸ and elsewhere demonstrates the effectiveness of these measures in reducing casualties among people on foot and bike. Other studies have shown that effective implementation of area-wide 20mph limits, traffic-free routes, and other measures to make walking and cycling safer and more pleasant, can help bring about increased levels of walking and cycling⁹.

¹ Brake and Bolt Burdon Kemp survey of parents on cycling, 2012

² Brake and Bolt Burdon Kemp survey of parents on cycling, 2012, and Brake and Churchill survey of parents on walking, 2012

³ Where widespread 20 limits have been introduced levels of walking and cycling increased by 20% [Citywide Rollout of 20mph speed limits](#), Bristol City Council Cabinet, 2012

⁴ Making the Case for Investment in the Walking Environment, University of the West of England and Living Streets, 2011

⁵ Grundy, C., Steinbach, R., Edwards, P., Wilkinson, P. Et al. "20 mph zones and Road Safety in London" Report for Transport for London, 2009

⁶ Beca Infrastructure Ltd, "Research Report 389 Cycle Safety: Reducing the Crash Risk", October 2009

⁷ Kraay, J. H., "Woonerfs and other Experiments in the Netherlands" *Built Environment* 12 (1986) 1/2 : 20-29

⁸ Grundy, C., Steinbach, R., Edwards, P., Wilkinson, P. Et al. "20 mph zones and Road Safety in London" Report for Transport for London, 2009

⁹ Where widespread 20 limits have been introduced levels of walking and cycling increased by 20% [Citywide Rollout of 20mph speed limits](#), Bristol City Council Cabinet, 2012

Brake believes 20mph is the most appropriate default speed limit for built up areas based on the huge difference in stopping distances between 20mph and 30mph, and the overwhelming evidence on the direct relationship between speed and road safety¹⁰ and our belief that everyone should be able to walk or cycle without fear or threat to their safety. Evidence on implementation of 20mph limits shows they bring about reductions in devastating and costly casualties for pedestrians and cyclists in particular¹¹, have widespread public support¹², and encourage greater levels of walking and cycling¹³. Brake is part of a '[GO 20' coalition of 10 charities](#) who all believe 20mph is the most appropriate default limit for towns, cities and villages. Until we achieve a lower default limit, we encourage more local authorities to follow the lead of Portsmouth, Bristol, London Borough of Islington and many others who have or are implementing widespread or town/city/area-wide 20mph limits.

Alongside calling for 20mph limits, Brake recommends the use of segregated and traffic-free paths as widely as possible on key routes as outlined above. Brake warns that simply marking a cycle lane on otherwise normal roads, especially busy, fast roads with hazardous junctions, does not constitute provision of a safe route. Brake recommends continuous cycle paths, safe along their full length, including safe negotiation of busy and complex junctions, and using segregated and traffic-free routes as much as possible, or where not possible making use of quiet roads with lower speeds. There should also be a partnership approach taken by local authorities and police to encourage implementation of accompanying measures to make these routes safer where they are on or crossing roads, particularly 20mph limits, and wider enforcement, including through use of technology like average speed cameras for urban areas.

However, because it is not possible to have safe, segregated routes connecting every home with schools, workplaces and colleges, it remains vital to lower our urban limit to 20mph, to make whole areas safer for cycling. Making cycling and walking the automatic choice for shorter journeys requires that people feel familiar and comfortable with walking and cycling in their immediate local area. Making whole communities welcoming for walkers and cyclists, rather than simply providing safe routes from A to B, will encourage people to get more active in their leisure time¹⁴. By helping people to feel more confident and comfortable walking and cycling in their immediate local area for leisure and very short journeys, people (including children) are more able to build up the fitness, skills and confidence necessary to undertake other journeys like commuting on foot or by bike¹⁵.

If children are to be brought up with walking and cycling as the normal way to make short journeys, they need to be able to walk and cycle for school and leisure purposes, to get used to those activities safely¹⁶. Children are safer where traffic is 20mph or slower, and where they can travel and play away from traffic entirely, such as on traffic-free routes and spaces. Children are not often allowed to choose how they travel to school, but if their local environment is safe, they are more likely to be allowed to travel actively and play outside¹⁷, making them more likely to be fit and healthy, and more likely to choose active travel for their

¹⁰ Speed and Road Safety: Synthesis of Evidence from Evaluation Studies, Transportation Research Board of the National Academies, 2006 (<http://trb.metapress.com/content/mv484245r1x4343m>), and The effects of drivers' speed on the frequency of road accidents, Transport Research Laboratory, 2000 (http://www.trl.co.uk/online_store/reports_publications/trl_reports/cat_traffic_and_transport_planning/report_the_effects_of_drivers_speed_on_the_frequency_of_road_accidents.htm)

¹¹ 20mph speed reduction initiative, The Scottish Executive, 2001 (<http://shcs.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/156487/0042012.pdf>), and 20mph Speed Limit Pilots Evaluation Report, Warrington Borough Council, 2010 (http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=warrington%2020mph%20limits&source=web&cd=6&ved=0CFcQFjAF&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.warrington.gov.uk%2Fdownload%2Fdownloads%2Fid%2F2362%2F20mph_pilot_scheme_full_report&ei=XugfUNbQGsPJhAftoYDAAQ&usq=AFQjCNFe9T4rvAQWNmn7KDLmIMPcficbLA&cad=rja)

¹² British Social Attitudes Survey, 2011 (<http://assets.dft.gov.uk/statistics/releases/2011-british-social-attitudes-survey-attitudes-to-transport/bsa-2011-report.pdf>)

¹³ Bristol City Council found a mean increase of 23% in walking and 20.5% in cycling Bristol City Council, 2012 (https://www.bristol.gov.uk/committee/2012/ua/ua000/0726_7.pdf)

¹⁴ Pucher, J. and Buehler, R., 'Making Cycling Irresistible: Lessons from the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany.' *Transport Reviews*, 2008.

¹⁵ Zlot, A. and Schmid, T., 'Relationships Among Community Characteristics and Walking and Bicycling for Transportation or Recreation' *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 2005.

¹⁶ Understanding Walking and Cycling, Lancaster University, 2011.

¹⁷ Brake and Bolt Burdon Kemp survey of parents on cycling, 2012, and Brake and Churchill survey of parents on walking, 2012

shorter journeys when they are older¹⁸. In this way, 20mph limits and traffic-free routes are also important in allowing children to practice and get used to active travel.

Brake argues that to bring about desired improvements in walking and cycling, we need a bold and determined approach from central government that ensures progress is made across the country, rather than a piecemeal localised approach where it is left up to local authorities to decide the level of priority they give this issue and what measures they implement. This should include lowering our urban default limit to 20mph, rather than leaving it up to authorities to decide whether to implement this evidenced and important measure, and to go to the expense of extra signage and other measures needed when switching a limit from the default. It should also include not only provision of additional funding for local authorities to implement safe walking and cycling facilities like traffic-free routes, but a requirement placed on local authorities to develop the network of safe routes and reduce risk for people on foot and bicycle.

Finally, long-term change in the safety and extent of cycling needs to include awareness-raising and engagement work, geared at drivers in particular but also cyclists and potential cyclists. Research from Norway¹⁹ and the UK²⁰ demonstrates that initiatives to increase levels of active travel and improve road safety are much more effective where they include educational and enforcement components. On the basis of this research, and our years of experience campaigning in road safety locally and nationally, we recommend the government undertakes to educate the public not only about the benefits cycling brings and steps cyclists can take to reduce their risks, but also, critically, the importance of drivers protecting cyclists and their responsibilities in doing so.

¹⁸ Timperio, A., Crawford, D., et al. 'Perceptions about the local neighbourhood and walking and cycling among children'. *Preventative Medicine*, 2004.

¹⁹ Phillips RO, [Ulleberg P](#), and [Vaa T](#)., "Meta-analysis of the effect of road safety campaigns on accidents", *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 2011 May;43(3):1204-18

²⁰ Chorlton K, Conner M. "Can enforced behaviour change attitudes: exploring the influence of Intelligent Speed Adaptation." *Accident Analysis and prevention*, 2012 Sep;48:49-56