

Response to Proposals for the London Local Authorities and Transport for London Bill

Overview

1. London Living Streets is part of Living Streets, a national charity established in 1929 as the Pedestrians' Association. London Living Streets campaigns for better streets and public spaces in the capital, calling for a higher priority to be given to pedestrians. London Living Streets is made up of local branches and contacts across the boroughs.
2. London Living Streets welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Proposals for the London Local Authorities and Transport for London Bill.
3. At a time when obesity and climate change are growing concerns for future generations and indeed our own generation, it is pleasing to note the increased emphasis these proposals put on the most sustainable form of transport – walking. Not only is walking the least polluting form of getting about, but it has been recommended by the Chief Medical Officer as the best way for the majority of the population to increase their activity levels to the required levels of 30 minutes on five days of the week. Achieving this level halves the risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, some cancers and reduces the risk of premature death by 20-30%.
4. The proposals in this Bill are generally most welcome. The challenge will be to see that they are implemented as fully and as widely as possible. Comments on specific clauses and a potential addition follow.

Control of items placed on the Highway

5. We welcome the measures to introduce new powers to remove items deposited on the highway – particularly on pavements. Across London pedestrians are affected by a variety of items on the footway, ranging from those that have a more permanent nature to those that are easily portable. Whilst a well managed shop display can add colour and interest to a street, those that spill over are also a nuisance to pedestrians. In addition, shops often clog up pavements with advertising, typically in the form of A-boards. Such inconveniences normally occur in town centres, where space is usually at a premium. We hope that the Bill will include an equal focus on items that are more portable in nature, such as A boards.

Attachment of street lamps and signs to buildings

6. It is widely accepted that reducing street clutter is a positive move. For the end user less clutter helps to create streets that are more pleasing on the eye and makes passing other pedestrians easier – important where space is restricted. For local authorities there are efficiency savings to be made too. Less clutter results in less maintenance, and the removal of posts makes cleansing easier.
7. The proposed powers would enable this good practice which is currently limited to the City, to be more widely extended in cases where co-operation is not forthcoming.
8. However we hope that the powers will be enforced with consideration and reason, with exemptions for listed buildings and a test to ensure that every item is actually needed. The managing authority should have a stringent procedure to ascertain whether the item is needed.

Damage to highway by developers

9. We welcome the proposed power requiring a deposit to be paid in advance of work by developers. The level of the deposit should be sufficient to act as a deterrent and as part of the system we recommend that a small proportion should be non-returnable in order that an effective monitoring and enforcement system can be established by the local authority.

Recovery of traffic management costs and street cleansing costs

10. We welcome measures that will contribute to and possibly enhance pedestrian safety at special events, hopefully encouraging more people to walk as a result. Residents living nearby major venues deserve the minimum of unnecessary interruption as a result of special events, including the return of the streets to a clean state.
11. However we urge caution to be applied to the classification of a special event. Any event that is not-for-profit must be exempt. Many community based initiatives, such as street parties, are coming under increasing pressure from a variety of sources and this proposal could be particularly threatening for them.
12. For public events on a massive scale, drawing crowds from all over the UK or even internationally, these proposals should be applied. For example, the NFL match at Wembley on October 28th should be classed as a special event, as should all Premiership matches, but sporting fixtures that primarily act to engage at the local level, such as football matches at AFC Wimbledon, should not.

Advanced Stopping Areas for Cyclists

13. We welcome measures that are designed to improve conditions for cycling as long as they are not to the detriment of people on foot. These proposals do not appear to have any negative impact on pedestrians, so subject to approval by cycling organisations, we welcome them.

Cycling on the footway: fixed penalties

14. London Living Streets welcome the attention that this Bill is placing on footway cycling. Footway cycling is frightening for all pedestrians, particularly older people. It affects other vulnerable groups as well, such as people with hearing impediments, and people with mobility difficulties or who have slow reaction times. Pedestrians need to feel safe on the pavement – with cyclists automatically dismounting as a matter of course.

15. The current situation does not give pedestrians the protection that they deserve from cyclists. The current fine of £30 is not a sufficient deterrent to ward off pavement cyclists. Neither does the number of tickets issued reflect the widespread daily breach of this offence across this capital.

16. We welcome the autonomy being proposed for local authorities to set the level of fixed penalty. Given the fear and anxiety that pavement cycling causes pedestrians, we believe that a fine of £100 should be considered by all local authorities and that work to support the Bill should encourage this level of fine as a minimum. Set against other fines for road traffic offences, £100 may seem a high, but in the era of an obesity epidemic and concern over climate change, pedestrians must be protected and walking trips must be encouraged.

17. We welcome the move to allow local authority employees to issue fixed penalty notices. It is our experience that pavement cycling is not a priority for the police. Where local communities have succeeded in making it a priority for their safer neighbourhoods team, it does not remain so for long. Empowering local authority employees to issue tickets against pavement cycling must be properly resourced and made a priority for these officers.

18. London Living Streets believe that cycling has a significant role to play if London is to become a truly walkable city. As such we would like to propose an alternative for first time offenders, that they are required to attend compulsory cycle training instead of paying the fine. In the long run we believe that this alternative will help to further establish cycling as a mode of transport and provide the skills and confidence so cyclists do not feel the need to cycle on the pavement.

19. Whilst these proposals related to enforcement are a significant step in the right direction, pavement cycling will continue to be an issue until conditions for cycling in the road are made safer. As such, London Living Streets is calling for 20mph to be made as the default on all residential roads in the capital, a move that would create conditions in which both walking and cycling could flourish.

Pedicabs

20. Pedicabs have a role to play in the overall transport mix on London's streets. In central London they are highly visible and provide a bold statement that sustainable transport has a significant role to play in 21st century London.
21. Better enforcement of pedicabs is required to ensure the safety of their riders, their passengers and other road users, especially pedestrians. Pedicabs tend to ply for trade in busy pedestrian areas, often circling on footways. In addition to the licensing proposals for pedicabs, the Bill should propose dedicated pedicab bays in the most popular trading areas, such as near Covent Garden tube.

Charging Points for Electric Vehicles

22. Electric charging points need to be carefully designed and implemented to ensure that pedestrian movement is not hindered and that the visual impact on the street is minimised, preferably having no overall effect.
23. In most cases we are aware of, this has not been the case.
24. Charging points are relatively expensive to design, implement and maintain. Their emphasis remains focussed on the motor vehicle, which in London, is against the grain of so many other policies such as congestion charging and targets which aim to stop and then reduce the use of motor vehicles.
25. Compared to establishing and encouraging transport by the most sustainable modes (walking and cycling) – the impact of electric cars is limited. There are other measures that would contribute more effectively to reducing pollution and emissions whilst also delivering other benefits too. For example, modal shift to walking, and cycling, would help tackle ill health by increasing physical activity.
26. Alternatively encouraging the development of car clubs would bring greater benefit than widely supporting the proliferation of electric charging points. Although in their infancy car clubs have been shown to have a positive effect amongst their members, either stopping members from buying cars or contributing to the decision to sell their vehicles. London Living Streets would prefer this Bill to support the development and growth of car clubs as opposed to charging points.

A potential addition: Cost of repair or replacement of street furniture damaged by motor vehicles

27. It is our understanding that, if a vehicle damages street furniture, the highway authority is not empowered to claim the cost of repair or renewal from the vehicle owner or operator.
28. Although it will often not be possible to identify the offending vehicle, in many cases it will be. So, a provision enabling highway authorities to recover the costs of repair or

renewal would contribute to improved street environment. Many streets suffer for long periods from street furniture damaged, and this makes them seedy and run-down.

London Living Streets
October 2007