

## **Response to Centre for Public Health, NICE on Air Pollution**

### **Response on behalf of Living Streets, June 2013**

We are the national charity that stands up for pedestrians. With our supporters we work to create safe, attractive and enjoyable streets, where people want to walk. We work with professionals and politicians to make sure every community can enjoy vibrant streets and public spaces.

We started life in 1929 as the Pedestrians Association and have been the national voice for pedestrians throughout our history. In the early years, our campaigning led to the introduction of the driving test, pedestrian crossings and 30 mph speed limits. Since then our ambition has grown. Today we influence decision makers nationally and locally, run successful projects to encourage people to walk and provide specialist consultancy services to help reduce congestion and carbon emissions, improve public health, and make sure every community can enjoy vibrant streets and public spaces.

### **General comments**

#### **20mph**

We would like to see the guidance include reference to the fact that speed limits have an impact on air pollution and that measures like a blanket 20 mph limit can help reduce air pollution levels. Evidence from research conducted to look at traffic calming showed that air pollution can be less when vehicles travel at 30kph rather than 50kph<sup>1</sup> and further evidence from Berlin seems to support this.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Joint working**

In the section on links with other public health themes we suggest that this guidance promotes the priority of this issue and encourages joint working between local authority departments working on health, transport, environment, housing and employment.

#### **Street design**

Furthermore road layouts and design should be altered to facilitate pedestrian and cyclist priority over motor vehicles to help encourage active travel and alter modal share. Public authorities should be required to do this both at public buildings and on the roads they administer.

Living Streets recognises that the current briefing includes street design as having an impact on air pollution. We therefore believe that boroughs should require developers to assess the impact of developments on air pollution. It is important to avoid a 'canyon effect' which can increase levels of air pollution by the building of tall buildings in highly trafficked streets. Polluted air is

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<sup>1</sup> T Pharoah and John Russell. Traffic Calming: Policy and Evaluations in Three European Countries Occasional Paper 2/1989, South Bank Polytechnic, London

<sup>2</sup> Berlin Environmental Atlas, 03.11.3 Clean Air Plan, 2011-2017 – Scenario Calculations for the Assessment of the Effectiveness of Selected Measures for Air Quality along Streets (Edition 2012). This can be accessed at: [http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/umwelt/umweltatlas/edc311\\_01.htm](http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/umwelt/umweltatlas/edc311_01.htm)

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trapped in the canyon, leading to sometimes dangerously high levels of nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter from vehicle exhausts.

### **Behaviour change initiatives**

Alongside investment and the development of pedestrian friendly infrastructure local authorities should promote walking using initiatives such as Walk to School, Walk to Work, as well as holding car free and open streets events.

### **Walking to School**

Walk to School (WtS) is a national campaign which has existed since 1995 and aims to encourage all parents and children to make walking to school part of their daily routine, emphasising the benefits to physical and mental health and wellbeing, the social aspects and the potential to address congestion, improve air quality and reduce carbon emissions. WtS reaches over 1.9 million children throughout the UK.

The best known element of the campaign, and the element around which much of Living Streets' evidence gathering has focused, is the Walk Once a Week (WoW) programme, which over 300,000 children now take part across the UK. WoW sees children record how they travel to school, on a class wall chart or individual postcards. If they walk at least four times a month, they receive a collectable badge for that month, designed in a national art competition which receives thousands of entries from children across the UK each year. These resources are obtained either by the local authority or directly by the school. The health benefits of walking to school are a key driver for the project: for example, children who travel by walking use twice as many calories as those who travel by car.

Our Walk to School outreach project began as a pilot project funded by the Department for Transport which saw us work in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council to work intensively with a cluster of schools. This work included using incentive schemes, promotional events, and working with parents and schools to identify and tackle local barriers to more walking.

At the end of the project, walking to school had increased from 46% to 53%. Park and Stride (where parents drop off their children at a designated point within walking distance of the school) increased from 8% to 18%, and driving rates decreased from 36% to 19%. **This is one of the most effective interventions we have seen in terms of shifting the mode of travel to school - in the UK and internationally.** As a result of our focus on breaking down behavioural barriers with parents, we saw a 33% reduction in the number of children who perceived school being too far to walk and a 44% reduction in the number who perceived that it took too long to walk to school.

Our Walk once a Week (WoW) extension project for the Department of Health saw us working with 736 schools and over 118,000 children in order to increase walking levels in schools across England. 61,567 children and 6,515 parents took part in surveys which revealed a 25% increase in numbers of children walking to school (during the project lifetime) and a 35% decrease in car use.

Before the WoW intervention, schools had a 43% walking proportion, and following the WoW interventions schools reached a peak of 59% walking in 2011, levelling at 54% in 2012 (the final year).

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In 2012, Living Streets - in partnership with Durham County Council - secured funding through the Government's Local Sustainable Transport Fund to roll out the outreach project in 11 local authority areas. The project targets to convert 4.2 million school journeys from car to walking and a further 2.8 million to Park and Stride, saving an estimated 3.59 thousand tonnes of CO2. In the first year alone we have launched Walk Once a Week (WoW) in 210 primary schools, reaching over 50,000 more children. We have also worked with 42 secondary schools and invested £70,000 in capital improvements to help remove environmental barriers to walking, which has leveraged in further match funding. By the end of the project in 2015 we will have collectively engaged over 1,000 schools (854 primary and 182 secondary). **Early results replicate the success of the pilot project, with walking rates at participating primary schools increasing from 53% to 68%.**

### **Walking Works**

Living Streets' Walking Works project engages with adults in employment to encourage more walking to, from and at work. Funded by BIG Lottery's Health and Wellbeing Fund as part of the Travel Actively consortium, the campaign has raised awareness of the benefits of walking more to over 28,000 individuals so far, through walking pledges, regular digital campaigns and the annual Walk to Work Week challenge. Walking Works includes a programme of more in-depth support for workplaces, including helping establish 'walking champions', running bespoke walking challenges and activities and helping workplaces to integrate walking activity with their workplace travel plan.

Walk to Work Week is the aspect of the Walk to Work programme with the widest participation and the most significant evaluation data. The 2011 Walk to Work Week evaluation (Sustrans, 2011)<sup>3</sup> found that:

- Since participating in Walk to Work Week, 57% of respondents felt that their overall level of walking had increased.
- All respondents were asked how they felt after taking part in the project. The top three responses were 'I feel fitter' (45%), 'I feel more healthy' (41%) and 'I am more active' (39%).
- Individuals achieving 30 minutes or more physical activity on five or more days per week increased from 29% at registration to 50% at follow up.

### **Public authority responsibilities**

Public authorities should be required to reduce the pollution they produce. They should prioritise cycle and disabled parking over general parking. Only low emissions vehicles should be used by themselves and contractors.

### **Local authority action**

All planning permission decisions should be dependent on the contractors using only low emissions vehicles.

Planning permission for new housing developments should stipulate that they support active travel modes such as walking through the creation of active travel networks between local amenities and public transport.. They should include investment in pedestrian infrastructure and

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<sup>3</sup> Sustrans Monitoring and Evaluation Unit. 2011. *Living Streets – Walk to Work Week 2011 – Follow-up Survey Results*

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be near to local shops and services to encourage people to make local journeys on foot to help encourage active travel.

### **Investment in greening**

There is ample evidence that plants help remove pollution. Living Streets believes that measures to provide a proportion of greening per head of population can help reduce air pollution. As well as trees this could be in the form of green roofs which could be required of all new builds and on all new rear extensions. We also believe that there should be measures taken to include the protection of greenspace in urban areas. The proportion of greenspace required obviously should increase for less urban areas.

### **For more details please contact:**

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