

Living Streets is 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.

Living Streets response to DfT consultation on local authorities highways maintenance funding 2015-16 to 2020-21

Introduction

Living Streets is 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 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. Eighty five years on, we continue to influence decision makers nationally and locally, run successful projects to encourage people to walk more, and provide specialist consultancy services to help reduce congestion and carbon emissions, and improve public health. We want to make sure that every community can enjoy the benefits of walking.

We are responding to the walking and cycling element in the Government's consultation on local highways maintenance funding. We are very welcoming of the potential inclusion of walking (and cycling) proposals in a future Challenge Fund, **as well as** footways and cycleways as additional elements in the funding formula. Enabling local authorities to invest in active travel makes sense for the economy, public health and wellbeing, and the environment. We agree that the weighting given to footways and cycleways should be proportionate to the relative value of these assets – this would reflect differences, for example, in spending on footway maintenance in urban and rural areas. We strongly support the collection of data on footway and cycleway lengths – as a valuable public asset it makes sense to know how much there is and what state it is in!

Response to the consultation questions:

Question 12: Do you agree that cycling and walking proposals could be included in any proposed Challenge Fund?

If a Challenge Fund for major maintenance projects is created, we agree that it should include walking (and cycling) proposals. We believe it is essential to provide as many funding opportunities as possible to enable local authorities to deliver in high quality footways that encourage people to be more physically active. Public Health England's Physical Activity Framework 'an evidence based approach to physical activity' makes the point that 'being active everyday needs to be embedded across every community and every place'. Creating active environments through the provision of attractive, well maintained walking and cycling infrastructure would assist the delivery of a range of Government policy objectives not least the Department's Door to Door Strategy, its new Cycling (and walking) Delivery Plan and Department of Health's public health targets.

The funding cap at £10 million per project, together with just two opportunities to access funds (now and in three years time) suggests that some local authorities may be hard pressed to submit proposals in time for funding announcements by March 2015. While politically timely, it would be preferable to allow more time for more considered proposals to be made. Otherwise, the Department risks creating a dash for cash and funding the first available projects as opposed to the best projects available.

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Question 13: Do you agree with the inclusion of cycleways and footways as additional elements to the funding formula?

We welcome the inclusion of footways (and cycleways) as additional elements to the funding formula. However, this should be in addition to, not instead of, the proposed availability of funding for walking and cycling through the Challenge Fund. Footways are an important part of the highway network and keeping them in good condition saves money in the long term – through fewer repairs, avoiding litigation from trips and falls, improving public health and creating walkable neighbourhoods where people want to live, shop and work. The inclusion of footways in the funding formula would also reflect different spending needs. For example, a 2013 Freedom of information request by Living Streets Scotland asked local authorities ‘what proportion of your road maintenance is spent on footways?’ found that on average it was about 10 per cent. However, this masked huge variation between urban and rural areas. In 2012/13 Edinburgh spent 25 per cent of its budget and Glasgow 8.5 per cent on footway maintenance, whereas South Ayrshire spent less than 1 per cent.

Question 14: Is 9% an appropriate weighting for cycling and walking within the funding formula? (this response also applies to question 16)

Footways are an integral part of the highway. Therefore, spending on footway maintenance should be integral to the budget allocation for highway maintenance. In the absence of official statistics on footway and cycleway lengths we accept the Department’s estimate that the Gross Replacement Value of these assets represents about 9 per cent of the total network value. Given that this represents almost a tenth of the total value of the local highways network, we strongly support the collection of data in 2016-17 on the extent (and ideally the condition) of footway and cycleway infrastructure. The Welsh Government is leading the field in this regard; through the implementation of the Active Travel Act (Wales) it has contracted Sustrans and Exegesis SDM to develop a data management system to map walking and cycling infrastructure. This could provide a useful starting point for data collection in England.

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