



Cycling Infrastructure

Current Government policy

Cycling infrastructure is a devolved policy area in the UK.

UK Government (related to policy in England only): In July 2020, the UK Government set out a cycling and walking strategy¹ with four core themes: better streets for cycling and people, cycling and walking at the heart of decision-making, empowering and encouraging local authorities, enabling people to cycle and protecting them when they do. The Government also set up Active Travel England, which was tasked to meet a target that by 2030, 50% of all short journeys are walked, wheeled or cycled².

Scotland: In April 2023, the Scottish Government published a framework for cycling³ which promised to 'work with local authorities to prioritise investment in the creation of connected cycling infrastructure protected from traffic and integrated with public transport', while also looking for ways to speed up the pace of upgrading infrastructure to protect cyclists.

Northern Ireland: The Department for Infrastructure has a walking and cycling unit. In 2015, the NI Government published 'Northern Ireland Changing Gear – a Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland'⁴ – a 25-year plan which focused on developing bicycle networks in urban areas and greenways (a traffic-free route) to connect cities focusing on active travel.

Wales: The Welsh Government's 2024-2027 active travel plan⁵ has an ambition for 45% of all journeys to be taken by public transport, cycling and walking by 2040. To enable this, it will continue 'to invest in the Active Travel Fund Programme to support local authorities in delivering their Active Travel Networks'.

In 2022, changes to the Highway Code⁶ (applying to the whole of the UK) introduced a hierarchy of road users meaning that cyclists should have priority in certain on-road circumstances.

¹<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5f1f59458fa8f53d39c0def9/gear-change-a-bold-vision-for-cycling-and-walking.pdf>

²<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6504468dfc63f6000d957346/active-travel-england-corporate-plan-2023-2025.pdf>

³<https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/53417/cycling-framework-for-active-travel-a-plan-for-everyday-cycling.pdf>

⁴<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/cycling-northern-ireland>

⁵<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2024-03/active-travel-delivery-plan-2024-to-2027.pdf>

⁶<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/the-highway-code-8-changes-you-need-to-know-from-29-january-2022>

IAM RoadSmart Research:

In the 2023 IAM RoadSmart Road Safety culture report⁷:

- 84% of motorists said it was unacceptable to drive in a dedicated cycle lane.
- Worryingly, 6% of drivers say they have driven regularly in a cycle lane in the past 12 months.
- Four-in-10 (40%) support a law that assumes the driver is always responsible for any collision with a cyclist or pedestrian in an urban area, however 60% oppose this. Support for the introduction of this law is higher among younger motorists.
- More than half of respondents (54%) said aggressive cyclists are a bigger problem than three years prior, however this was lower than the 61% who said aggressive drivers are a bigger problem than three years ago.

External Research

Final 2022 DfT road safety statistics⁸ show:

- In 2022, there were 91 pedal cyclist fatalities on Great Britain's roads, 9% fewer than in 2019.
- There were 23 reported road fatalities per billion miles travelled by road user type in Great Britain in 2022 compared with 2019 – the third highest of all road user groups. In overall casualties per billion miles travelled, cyclists were the second highest behind motorcyclists.
- Car occupant casualties accounted for 44% of road fatalities and 53% of all road casualties in 2022, and the majority of road collisions involved at least one car.

A Paris School of Economics – report⁹ into the impact of safer cycling infrastructure found:

- A review into London's cycle superhighway scheme 'is associated with a large increase in cycle traffic. The treatment effect at opening represents an increase of about 25% in ridership. The effect increases over time by about 20% a year'.
- The review's author also concluded: "I look at the difference between painted lanes and lanes fully segregated by a kerb (the car traffic is physically separated from the cycling lanes). The reduction in accidents seems to be driven by the latter, even though a small sample size might also be at play here."
- It concludes: "these results indicate that separating cyclists from motorised traffic reduces the number of accidents. Both the number of accidents per cyclist and the absolute number of accidents decrease, indicating that there is safety in numbers – cars are more likely to expect cyclists if they see cycling infrastructures."

⁷<https://media.iamroadsmart.com/documents/iam-roadsmart-road-safety-culture-report-2023-440339>

⁸<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/reported-road-casualties-great-britain-annual-report-2022/reported-road-casualties-great-britain-annual-report-2022#casualties-by-age-and-sex>

⁹<https://www.parisschoolofeconomics.eu/IMG/pdf/louise-bernard-the-impact-of-cycling-segregated-lanes-on-road-users-in-london.pdf>

IAM RoadSmart calls to action:

- **Segregated lanes:** We encourage authorities to build high-quality cycling infrastructure in urban areas – with particular focus at junctions where the safety risk is often highest. Bike boxes at lights should be the default, allowing cyclists to filter through to a safe passage at the front of junctions.
- **Park and pedal:** If councils wish to reduce motor vehicles in city centres, viable alternatives such as park and pedal schemes should be available alongside general hire schemes.
- **Cycling skills:** We encourage new or lapsed cyclists to invest in a course which can help make them confident on the roads. Charities such as CyclingUK have plenty of options to choose from.
- **Driving skills:** We call on the Department for Transport in the UK to continue to promote changes made to the Highway Code in 2022. Though motorist awareness is improving, there remains confusion among some which creates an unsafe road environment.
- **Enforcement:** IAM RoadSmart supports creating new laws of causing death by dangerous cycling and we believe that this will improve cycling standards. However, an average of three pedestrians deaths per year are caused by cycling every year with most others caused by motor vehicles. Therefore, while enforcement is important, police resources should focus more on where intervention will make the biggest difference.
- **Road safety strategy & national roads renewal programme:** We encourage Government to look closely at the impact high quality infrastructure can play in reducing collisions between cyclists and motor vehicles. High-quality road surfaces are also vital in protecting those on two wheels from injuries sustained from potholes.

COMMENT

IAM RoadSmart Director of Policy and Standards, Nicholas Lyes said:

“Safe, high-quality cycling infrastructure is essential if we are to make bicycles the natural choice for shorter journeys – particularly in urban areas.

For many, concerns about their own safety are often a barrier if considering switching from four wheels to two.

While there is often a narrative that pits driver against cyclist and vice-versa, it should be remembered that ultimately people just want to complete their journeys safely and efficiently no matter what mode they take.”