



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

5th March 2021

Dear Constance,

RE: CYCLING AND WALKING

Thank you for your recent correspondence about cycling and walking, your comments upon which I have read with great interest.

Cycling and walking have a significant role to play in tackling some of the biggest health and environmental challenges that we face. Indeed, an uptake of these greener modes of transport throughout the pandemic has played a great role in the national Coronavirus effort, helping to reduce the pressure on public transport, and in facilitating social distancing, in turn lowering infection rates. I therefore welcome this increased interest in cycling and walking and hope to see these behavioural changes last.

I am very pleased therefore that the Government has committed to the largest ever financial boost for active travel of an additional £2 billion for cycling and walking over the next five years. This will deliver transformational change, hopefully encouraging people to maintain their transition to greener, more sustainable modes of transport such as cycling. In the Summer, the Department for Transport also published the *Gear Change* policy paper, detailing a bold new action plan to boost active travel.

The first stage of this £2 billion investment was a £250 million emergency 'Active Travel Fund'. Through this, the Government supported local authorities to increase the amount of road space provided for cycling, and enabled local authorities to reallocate road space and make changes to road layouts in response to COVID-19. The fund delivers new 'pop-up cycle lanes' with protected space for cycling, cycle and bus-only corridors, safer junctions and wider pavements. Furthermore, a £50 'Fix Your Bike Voucher' scheme was launched, to help people to bring their bikes out of retirement. It was hugely popular and there will be more opportunities to secure vouchers in the coming months.

Beyond these measures, there will be a long-term cycling programme and budget, which will ensure a guaranteed funding pipeline. This will usher in thousands of miles of protected cycle routes in our towns and cities and improve the national network.

Additionally, more than 1,000 miles of safe and direct cycling and walking networks are due to be delivered by 2025, with network plans developed and being built out in every town and city in England. Cycle training will be made available for any child or adult who wants it and a new national e-bike programme will be introduced to increase access to e-bikes. I welcome that Cycling UK have already provided information on how cycling can be enjoyed safely.

Higher standards for cycling infrastructure have also been introduced and a new inspectorate, Active Travel England, will ensure these new standards are upheld. The new standards will ensure schemes are better designed around the needs of cyclists and will make sure that schemes support the growing numbers of cyclists. I understand that the Department for Transport is already developing a framework to help local authorities monitor and evaluate the schemes that they will be delivering through phase two of the 'Active Travel Fund'.



A consultation was also held on strengthening the *Highway Code* to enhance protections for cyclists and pedestrians. Amongst other things, Ministers want to improve the legal protections afforded to vulnerable road users and introduce tougher lorry safety standards.

I trust that the Government and the Department for Transport will continue to work closely with transport providers and local authorities to deliver on the vision of making the country a great walking and cycling nation.

While the monitoring and evaluation of schemes, including impacts on traffic flows, is a matter for local authorities, I understand that the Department for Transport is currently developing a framework to help local authorities monitor and evaluate the schemes that they will be delivering through tranche two of the Active Travel Fund. Through this, there will be consideration of impacts before and after scheme implementation.

The Government's plan to boost active travel also commits to tackling 'rat-running' and increasing the number of low-traffic neighbourhoods. The plan also pledges to increase the number of 'school streets' to protect children and encourage walking to school. Moreover, Ministers will select up to twelve willing local authority areas to benefit from intensive investment in mini-Holland schemes, and one small or medium-sized city will be chosen to create the country's first zero-emission transport system. Cycle parking facilities will also be boosted, as will bicycle storage capacity on trains.

Investment in recent years has also enhanced cycling and walking infrastructure more broadly. Indeed, £210 million through the 'Cycle Ambition Cities' programme has delivered 155 miles of new segregated cycle routes, 186 miles of new on-road and off-road routes for cyclists and pedestrians and 136 miles of off-road cycling signage and resurfacing improvements across eight cities. In addition, £22 million has been invested to upgrade 32 routes, covering 103 miles, along the national cycling network.

The Department for Transport has been providing support to 46 local authorities to assist with the preparation of 'Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plans'. Now with the urgent need to increase cycling and walking, local authorities are being encouraged to bring forward permanent schemes already in the pipeline and which can be relatively speedily constructed – this could be under 'Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plans'.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you, then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes
Tom

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**