



Department for  
**Regional  
Development**  
[www.drdni.gov.uk](http://www.drdni.gov.uk)

# DRAFT BICYCLE STRATEGY

for Northern Ireland  
August 2014





# 1.0

## INTRODUCTION

The Department for Regional Development (DRD) has prepared a Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland which sets out, over a 25 year horizon, how we plan to make Northern Ireland a cycling community.

This Draft Strategy document outlines our vision for cycling in Northern Ireland and, at a high level, how we intend to achieve this vision.

In accordance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) a Section 75 Equality of Opportunity Screening Analysis Form has been completed on the draft Strategy. The draft Strategy has not been subject to Rural proofing as it will be more meaningful to undertake a 'Rural Proofing' exercise on the Bicycle Strategy Delivery Plan.

## 1.1 CONSULTATION

The consultation period will run from 27th August 2014 to 21st November 2014.

We will also be hold a series of Public Consultation events during October 2014, these will include events in rural areas. Full details of events will be sent to stakeholders, advertised on our website and published in the press in due course.

## 1.2 TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

What we have outlined in this Draft Strategy are the issues which we consider to be key in establishing a cycling culture in Northern Ireland. You can send us your views on the issues that feature in this document and on any other relevant issues which may not have been covered to the address below.

This document is available in a range of formats. Please contact us with your requirements .

We would like to receive your response by Friday 21st November 2014.

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We will acknowledge receipt of your submission.

We will prepare and publish a Consultation Report outlining the Department's response to the issues raised in due course.

In accordance with the requirement of the Freedom of information act (2000) all information contained in your response may be subject to publication or disclosure. This may include personal information such as your name and address. If you want your response or your name and address to remain confidential, you should explain why confidentiality is necessary. Your request will be granted only if it is consistent with freedom of information obligations. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your email system will not be regarded as binding on the Department.



# 2.0

## OUR CYCLING FUTURE

### 2.1 VISION

The Department for Regional Development has developed a vision for cycling, which outlines the kind of cycling community we would like Northern Ireland to be in 25 years. The vision is

“To establish a cycling culture in Northern Ireland to give people the freedom and confidence to travel by bicycle, and where all road users can safely share space with mutual respect.”

The vision for cycling is set within the context of, and driven by the Executive’s Programme for Government priorities of growing a sustainable economy, improving health and well being while building communities and protecting the environment. Cycling can make a significant contribution towards the five Programme for Government priorities.

We plan on achieving this vision by first publishing this high level Bicycle Strategy and following it up with a Bicycle Strategy

Delivery Plan which will outline specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound objectives, policies and actions.

We want to be visionary in our approach and we want to embrace innovation.

We are developing a long term strategy, spanning a 25 year horizon, to give us the chance to make Northern Ireland a cycling society.

We want this society to be a community which values, nurtures and celebrates cycling in all its forms – on-road, off-road, commuter, recreation, journeys to education etc.

We aspire to become more like our European neighbours who have embraced the bicycle as simply ‘another mode’ of transport that is accessible, attractive, safe and desirable.

Cycling is not just beneficial for the individual, but also delivers benefits for wider society including, less congestion, fewer sick days, longer life expectancy, less wear and tear on the roads, less pollution and buoyant local economies.

We want to reap the benefits of cycling for everyone.

We have looked, and will continue to monitor what our near neighbours in England, Wales, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland are doing to progress cycling, and we will draw on the experience of other European countries who are considered to be established cycling societies.



We understand that we have a long way to go, and that it will take beyond a 25 year horizon to reap the full benefits of our bicycle strategy. However we are committed to our vision.

We will work with other Government Departments, District Councils, the voluntary and private sectors and other interested parties to ensure that the Strategy is fully and optimally implemented.

## 2.2 WHY A BICYCLE STRATEGY?

We feel that it is significant that this document is called a 'Bicycle Strategy' rather than a 'Cycling Strategy' as it presents a clear signal that we are planning for a mode of transport, rather than simply the activity of 'cycling'. In planning for the mode we are affording the bicycle the same level of attention as other modes.

## 2.3 MAKING THE CONNECTIONS

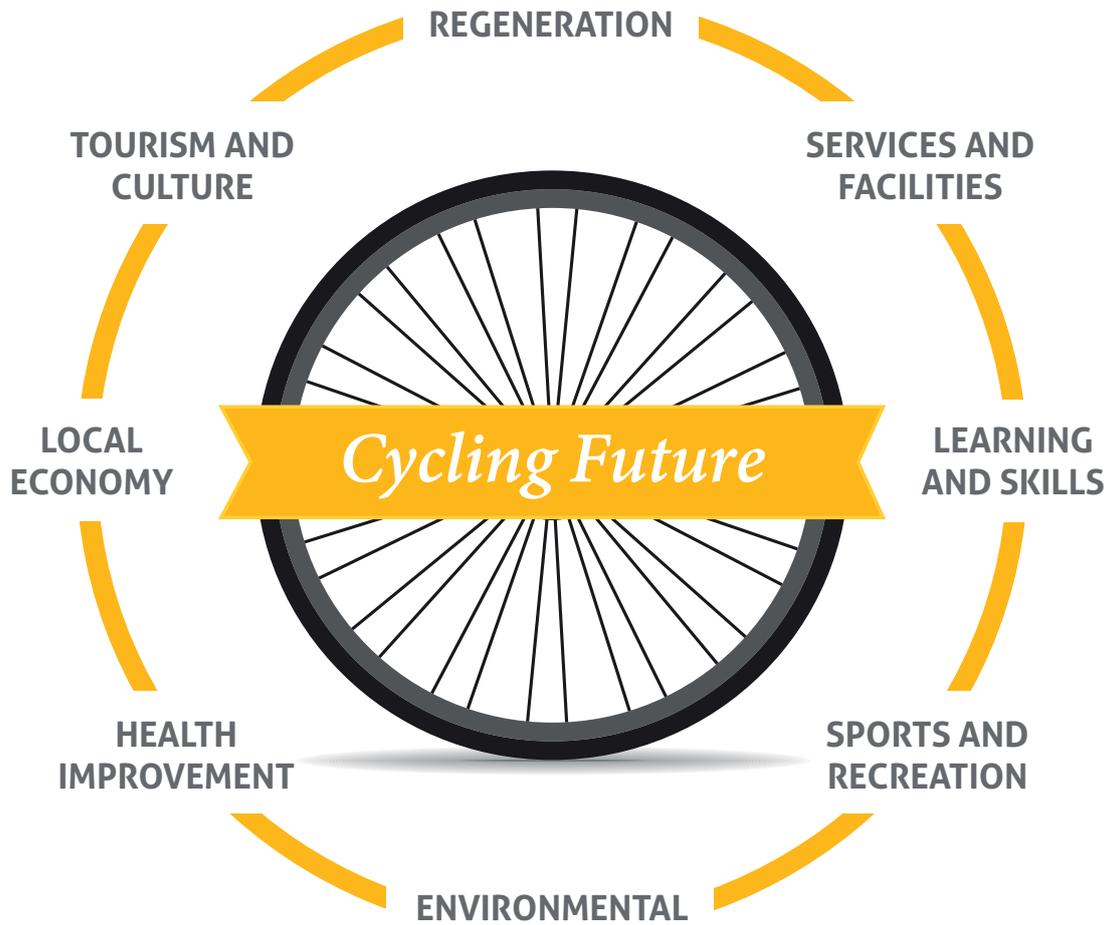
Our 'cycling future' is interrelated with a number of other factors, some of which are outside the remit of the Department. For example, increased levels of bicycle use can make a positive contribution towards health, transport, environmental, economic and social objectives.

Responsibility for some of these areas sits with other Government Departments or public bodies. For this reason we feel it is vitally important that we work across the sectors to develop and implement this strategy to make sure that the greatest benefits are delivered for everyone.

The key connections between our cycling future and other sectors are summarised overleaf.



FIGURE 2.1: Making the Connections - A New Approach



## Health Improvement

Implementation of the Bicycle Strategy has the potential to play a significant part in achieving national health policies. The health benefits of increased levels of cycling are numerous, and include a fitter, healthier society, improved mental health, lower levels of obesity and fewer sick days from work.

## Tourism and Culture

Northern Ireland is an excellent tourism and holiday location. The Bicycle Strategy can assist in celebrating the unique character of Northern Ireland by developing Amenity Routes, Greenways and cross border routes. We want people to come here to enjoy a good, high quality cycling experience and take that behaviour home with them.

## Services and Facilities

Implementing the Strategy will result in improved access to a greater range of services and facilities. Improved access supports social equality and integration.

## Learning and Skills

Implementing the Strategy will result in improved access to education and training. Working directly with children and young people will assist in establishing sustainable travel behaviour from an early age. Helping adults to improve their cycling

skills will empower more adults to choose to cycle, thereby improving their ability to access learning, training and employment opportunities.

## Environmental

The Bicycle Strategy will contribute to improvements in the physical environment. Increased levels of cycling could contribute to reduced congestion, improved air quality, less noise pollution and a cleaner environment.

## Regeneration

By contributing to enhanced public realm the Strategy will contribute to making better places in which to live and work. By creating vibrant, safer and well used urban spaces people will be encouraged back into our towns and cities.

## Sports and Recreation

Implementation of the Bicycle Strategy will support participation in sporting activities and improve access to recreational facilities.

## Local Economy

By providing safe, accessible and direct connections between residential areas, employment areas and retail centres the Bicycle Strategy will support the local economy.



# 3.0

## BACKGROUND

We know that increased use of the bicycle can improve our society. It can contribute to improvements in public health, air pollution, noise pollution, urban design, sense of place, social inclusion and education.

Up until now the money available for cycling has been spread thinly across Northern Ireland. We want to change that approach to a prioritised, more focussed approach to make sure that the full benefits of spend on cycling are realised.

To begin with we will focus on a small number of areas, develop detailed

proposals for these places and begin by rolling out pilot projects.

We will closely monitor our pilot projects to make sure we identify the full range of benefits, and adopt a lessons learnt approach where pilots are less successful than we expected.

We are developing a 'three pillar approach' for the development of cycling which includes careful planning, high quality infrastructure and effective behaviour change campaigns.



**FIGURE 3.1:** Three Pillar Approach

Infrastructure provision on its own is not usually sufficient to generate new numbers of bicycle trips. We know we need a creative approach to encourage more people to cycle part or all of their everyday journeys.

We need to develop comprehensive programmes which are made up of a variety of initiatives and work areas.

We know that in addition to 'Building', we also need to 'Support' and 'Promote'.

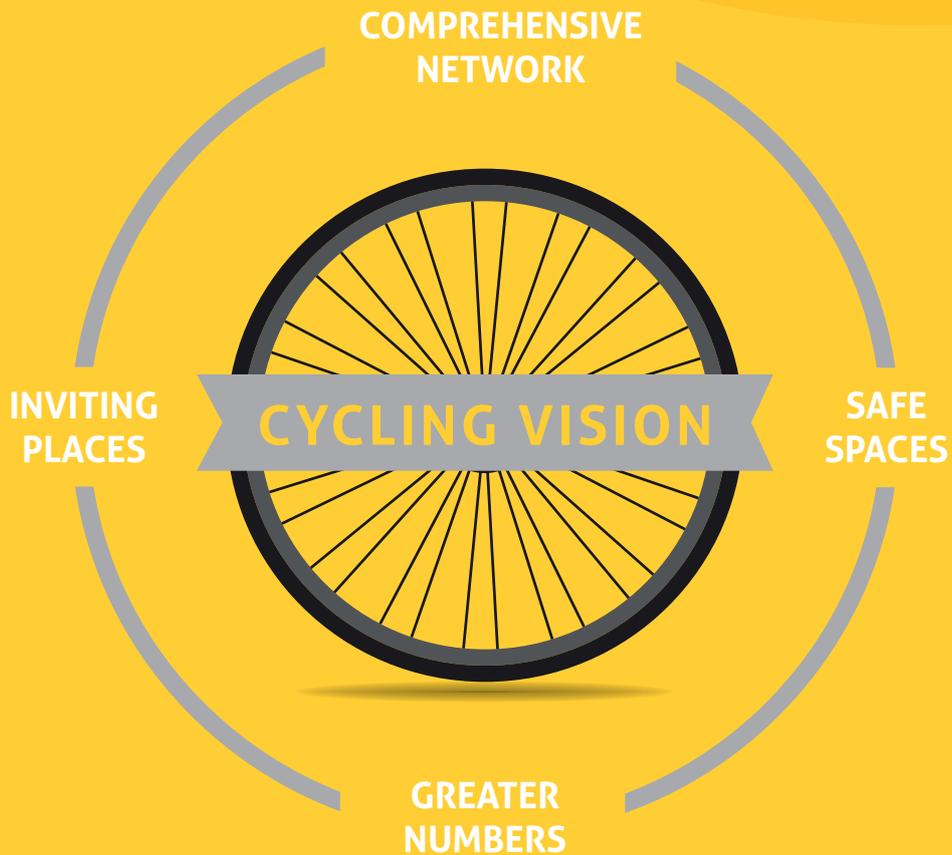


# 4.0

## MOVING TOWARDS OUR VISION

We have developed four key elements which will contribute to achieving our vision for cycling in Northern Ireland. These are:

**FIGURE 4.1:**  
Key Elements for Achieving our Vision



## 4.1 A COMPREHENSIVE NETWORK FOR THE BICYCLE

This will comprise of:

- Arterial routes
- Quiet routes
- Greenways

We are committed to creating a network of high quality, direct, joined up routes. We envisage a series of 'arterial routes' in our urban areas, which will largely mirror our arterial road network and be in a radial form.



We will develop 'Quiet routes' which will offer convenient yet quieter, less trafficked options for cyclists in our urban areas.



We will develop 'Greenways' which may be orbital or less direct, off road routes into or between our urban areas.



Local routes will feed into this hierarchy of routes in order to deliver an area based cycle network providing links to shops, community facilities, places of education and workplaces.

Since 2002 the Department has invested over £10 million in the development and expansion of cycle lanes and on cycling infrastructure measures. However, we appreciate that many people feel that provision is frequently fragmented and of varying quality.

Going forward we will ensure that provision is more integrated and coherent in nature, by providing a 'whole of route' treatment. Where 'opportunities' arise, i.e. provision of bicycle infrastructure as part of road maintenance or upgrade schemes we will seize these opportunities, whilst emphasising how these improvements fit into the wider vision for Northern Ireland.



### 4.1.1 URBAN ROUTES

In urban areas we will develop masterplans which will build on the 'comprehensive network for the bicycle' connecting where people want to travel from/ get to.

Our masterplans will cover defined geographic areas, will contain detailed proposals for bicycle infrastructure, in addition to details of area specific behaviour change initiatives and campaigns, and will contain locally driven interventions.

In response to the perception that provision for bicycles is frequently fragmented and of varying quality we want to focus funding resources in specific locations initially, to develop a more joined up approach to cycling provision.

At the moment there is a general perception that levels of commuter cycling in Belfast are higher than in other urban areas. This coupled with the fact that Belfast is the most populated urban area in Northern Ireland has drawn us to conclude that the first masterplan we develop should be for Belfast.

We plan to develop the masterplan for Belfast and then commence work on masterplans for other urban areas. These will be based upon the existing Transport Plans.

### 4.1.2 RURAL ROUTES

We recognise that there are differences between using the bicycle in an urban area and in a rural area. Cycling in rural areas presents particular problems such as higher speed roads, sometimes narrow, meandering roads with limited opportunities for safe overtaking by motorised vehicles, the presence of agricultural vehicles and longer distances between urban centres.

Where it has been possible to provide cycle tracks and lanes on main roads in rural areas we have done so. We will continue make this provision where opportunities arise, especially where there is cycling demand.

We plan on developing specific interventions, including greenways, and piloting them in rural areas so that we can measure the impact of such interventions.



### 4.1.3 GREENWAYS

We recognise that quieter less trafficked routes, such as Greenways are good examples of off-road routes which are attractive to a broad spectrum of cyclists and we intend to support the development of additional Greenways throughout Northern Ireland where possible.

Greenway routes are best suited to old railway beds or canal banks, where gradients tend to be small and attract new, inexperienced and young cyclists. However, greenways can be potentially developed anywhere with similar properties.

We intend to look at proposals to develop both urban and rural Greenways, as we recognise that in urban areas Greenways offer the potential to link housing areas, schools and amenities, whilst in rural areas they can be a valuable tourist attraction as well as providing a link to local facilities. Where possible we aspire to connect urban and rural Greenways in order to create long distance, high quality routes.



### 4.1.4 MAINTENANCE

Where we provide bicycle infrastructure it is very important that it is maintained to a high standard: both in terms of routine maintenance (i.e. surfacing – the surface of a cycle lane should be maintained to roadway standards) and clearance (i.e. high priority afforded to the clearance of glass / snow / debris on the bicycle network).

We will develop targets in relation to the maintenance and clearance of our cycle routes.

## 4.2 SAFE SPACES FOR THE BICYCLE

We know that safety is important to people using the bicycle. There are a number of elements to safety that we want to address.

It is important we make changes to our transport network that contribute to increased safety for people who use the bicycle.



### 4.2.1 DESIGN GUIDANCE

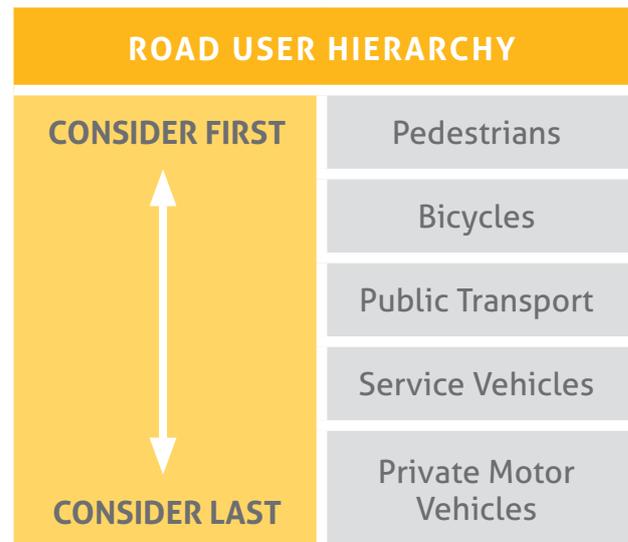
We plan to develop new, best practice design guidance which will be used by those designing for cycling. This guidance will identify ways that junctions, roundabouts and cycle lanes can be made safer and made to feel safer. The guidance will promote a 'common standard' to work to, and it will give cyclists confidence that their safety is taken seriously and that steps are being taken to make the network as safe as possible.

We envisage that the guidance will rely on general principles and flexible guidelines rather than strict specifications and rigid categorisation.

### 4.2.2 HIERARCHY OF ROAD USERS

It is important to us that we fully acknowledge the concept of a hierarchy of road users which has been developed for use in the planning and design processes for new developments and proposed traffic management schemes.

**FIGURE 4.2:** Road User Hierarchy



\*Adapted from Department for Transport (2007), Manual for Streets

The objective of this hierarchy is to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable road users are fully considered in urban highway schemes, but not necessarily to give priority to pedestrians and cyclists in every location.

We are also mindful that there are different 'types' of cyclist, who have different requirements. We will consider the requirements of likely users on a scheme by scheme basis.



FIGURE 4.3: Designing for Cyclists

DESIGNING FOR CYCLISTS	
TYPE OF CYCLIST	LIKELY REQUIREMENTS
<b>FAST COMMUTER</b>	Confident in most on-road situations, and will use a route with significant traffic volumes if it is more direct than a quieter route.
<b>EXPERIENCED UTILITY CYCLIST</b>	May seek some segregation at busy junctions and on links carrying high-speed traffic.
<b>INEXPERIENCED UTILITY CYCLIST, COMMUTER AND LEISURE CYCLIST</b>	May be willing to sacrifice directness in terms of both distance and time, for a route with less traffic and more places to stop and rest. May travel more slowly than regular cyclists.
<b>CHILD</b>	May require segregated, direct routes from residential areas to schools, even where an on-road solution is available. Design needs to take account of personal security issues. Child cyclists should be anticipated in all residential areas and on most leisure cycling routes.
<b>USERS OF SPECIALISED EQUIPMENT</b>	Includes people with disabilities using hand-cranked machines and users of trailers, trailer-cycles, tandems and tricycles. This group requires wide facilities free of sharp bends and an absence of pinch-points or any other features which force cyclists to dismount. Cycle tracks and lanes where adult cyclists frequently accompany young children should be sufficiently wide to allow for cycling two abreast. This enables the adult to ride on the offside of the child when necessary.

\*Adapted from Department for Transport (2007), Manual for Streets



### 4.2.3 A LEGIBLE NETWORK

We recognise the importance of developing a consistent, uniform signage and design format for our 'comprehensive network for the bicycle.'

It is vitally important that we have distinctive design attributes for the cycle network as it will minimise confusion for cyclists and other road users. By developing a legible, easily identifiable brand standard we will increase the sense of security and safety for all road users and increase Northern Ireland's potential as a tourism destination.

### 4.2.4 RESPECT AND UNDERSTANDING

We want to encourage greater respect and understanding between all users of the transport network. This includes car drivers, bus drivers, tax drivers, HGV drivers, van drivers, cyclists and pedestrians. It is important that there is awareness, care, courtesy and consideration for each of the modes and that each knows how best to interact with the others.

There are a number of ways we would like to approach these issues, including:

- Cycle Training/ Bikeability
- Driver Training
- HGV Driver Training
- Bus Driver Training
- Taxi Driver Training
- Media Campaigns delivering key safety messages to all road users.

We will work with Government Departments, representatives of the respective industries and licensing bodies to develop specific interventions promoting greater respect and understanding.



### 4.2.5 EDUCATION

We know that by working with the education sector and young people we can influence the travel behaviour of young people. We feel we can achieve this through a number of channels including:

- TravelwiseNI Safer Routes to Schools
- Department of Education funded bicycle infrastructure, Cycle Proficiency Training
- Sustrans 'Bike It' Programme



We recognise that adults too require support to build confidence and skills to enable them to cycle. A key mechanism for this is the availability of adult cycle proficiency training.

### 4.3 GREATER NUMBERS OF PEOPLE TRAVELLING BY BICYCLE



We want to increase the numbers of people travelling by bicycle.

Where it is possible for a person to travel by bicycle, we want to encourage them and make them feel safe and comfortable doing so.

We need to make a greater, more highly visible effort to improve the security of those using the bicycle which will help to 'tempt' non cyclists to cycle shorter journeys.

We want to make the bicycle an attractive, obvious mode of transport, and to help those who choose to cycle, by:

- Having high quality infrastructure which provides greater priority for the bicycle;
- Providing secure cycle parking where it is required;
- Developing Bicycle Hubs;
- Promoting the 'Cycle to Work' scheme to employers;
- Promoting e-bikes;
- Public Bike Hire schemes.



### 4.3.1 INTERCHANGE BETWEEN MODES

We know cycling is part of the larger transport picture. We recognise the importance of helping interchange between different modes of transport by making sure cycle routes and infrastructure are integrated into our transport hubs, bus and rail stations, major bus stops and Park & Ride sites.

We would like to address a number of issues relating to facilitating modal interchange including:

- Secure cycle parking at entry/ departure points from public transport
- Carriage of bicycles on public transport
- The use of folding bikes



Facilitating interchange between modes will give a greater number of people the opportunity to cycle part of their journey and to cover greater distances.

### 4.3.2 WORKING WITH EMPLOYERS

We recognise that employers have a significant role to play in facilitating and encouraging people to travel to work by bicycle. We want to work with employers and support them to make the changes necessary to get people cycling to work. We currently work with employers through:

- Bike to Work Day
- Promotion of the Cycle to Work Scheme
- Workplace Travel Plans



We want to work effectively and efficiently with employers to support them in encouraging their staff to cycle to work. We will investigate best practice in this area and seek to develop specific interventions to this end.



## 4.4 INVITING PLACES FOR ALL

An important element of our strategy is a focus on public spaces and creating a desire to spend time in our public spaces. It is about improving Northern Ireland for everyone, including those with no particular desire to get on a bicycle.

People's experience of the urban environment and its life has a significant role in the choices they make in relation to transport. We want our public spaces to be lively, attractive, safe, sustainable and healthy. We want people to spend more time in these spaces.



Travelling by bicycle helps people to experience our public spaces intimately, and keeps people in touch with the changing seasons.

### 4.4.1 TRAFFIC CALMING

A key factor in making our urban spaces inviting is our ability to create a calmer traffic environment. We are keen to explore creative and innovative traffic calming ideas and pilot these in appropriate locations.

20mph zones and 20mph limits have the potential to make a significant contribution to a 'calmer traffic environment'. It is important to recognise the difference between 20mph zones and 20mph limits.

20mph zones, are designed to be self-enforcing, using physical measures such as humps, chicanes and gateway features to achieve the desired speed reduction.

To date around five hundred 20mph zones have been introduced. These have been implemented in locations where local residents have expressed a desire for reduced speed limits and following consultation with local stakeholders.

20mph limits, consist of a speed limit change which drivers are alerted to using 20mph speed limit signs.

20mph limits are most appropriate for roads where average speeds are already low, and the guidance suggests below 24mph.

The DoE Road Safety Strategy 2020 identifies an action measure to pilot 20mph limits. Five pilot 20mph limit schemes are being implemented.



Monitoring of the average speed of traffic in the pilot areas will be undertaken, along with local consultation exercises to assess whether 20mph limits demonstrate improved road safety as well as the wider benefits of lower speed limits.

Evidence shows that the implementation of 20mph zones and limits reduces the number and severity of road traffic collisions, and can contribute to cyclists feeling safer cycling on road.

If we can more effectively manage traffic speeds in specific areas we will be able to create safer urban spaces which are dominated by people not cars. Higher volumes of people will bring life and vitality to streets.

#### 4.4.2 NEW DEVELOPMENTS

By working with those who have responsibility for land use planning policy we want to ensure planning policy accurately reflects our commitment to recognise the bicycle as an integral mode of transport. Furthermore, we want to ensure that the impact of new developments on cycle provision is appropriately identified in Transport Assessments. We want to ensure proposed changes to the transport network make provision for access by bicycle.

#### 4.4.3 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES

We strive to work with other Government Departments and Councils to ensure that provision for bicycles is represented comprehensively in any new Environmental Improvement Schemes.

When detailed proposals for Environmental Improvement Schemes are being drawn up we want to make a meaningful contribution that will lead to better spaces for all members of society to use.



# 5.0

## MEASURING SUCCESS

The Bicycle Strategy Delivery Plan will be published following the finalisation of this Bicycle Strategy. The Delivery Plan will contain a series of specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound objectives, policies and actions. This will form the basis for the monitoring undertaken on the progress made by the Strategy.

We have consciously chosen not to set an arbitrary Northern Ireland wide target for the percentage of people cycling by a nominal date as we do not think it will be useful in encouraging people to use the bicycle as a mode of transport at local level.

It is our intention to develop specific city wide or local area targets through our 'masterplanning' approach. This way targets will reflect local circumstances, and avoid a 'one size fits all' approach.

It is however suggested that ultimately, we will evaluate the overall impact of the Bicycle Strategy in terms of modal shift, both within defined geographic areas and Northern Ireland wide.





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