

Active Travel Enquiry: Written evidence from David Hunter, Not for Profit Planning

1. I am responding to this enquiry as an independent transport consultant, with a particular interest in inclusive and accessible transport/streets.
2. While 'Active Travel' is generally understood to mean walking and cycling, a fundamental problem with the use of the term is that it is often presumed to mean principally cycling. This implication is evidenced in the terms of the Committee's own enquiry, which in the introductory paragraph cites the Netherlands and Denmark as exemplar countries: of course what these countries are famous for is high levels of cycling.
3. It is necessary to state clearly that **walking is far more important than cycling**. Many more people walk than cycle - probably more than 20 walking trips for each cycle trip - and a much more diverse range of people walk than cycle (in terms of gender, age, disability and social class, for example). Walking is an essential component of almost all bus journeys. and many journeys by bike, train, taxi and indeed private car, as well as 'walking journeys'.
4. Official statistics grossly under-record walking. One example to demonstrate this is that the DfT's own statistics claim that only 32% of bus trips outside London (47% in London) involve 'a walking stage'. As almost every bus journey involves walking, this illustrates how 'everyday walking' is under-reported (a fact acknowledged by DfT statisticians) https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/484929/nts-multistage.pdf
5. The Committee will no doubt receive high volumes of responses from people calling for more investment in cycling infrastructure. Cyclists are far more effectively mobilised as lobbyists than walkers. This is probably because there is a much stronger identity associated with being 'a cyclist' than with being 'a walker' despite (or because of?) the almost universal nature of walking. It is essential that policy recognises this and responds to investment requirements with dispassionate analysis, rather than the strength of pressure groups. While I support improved facilities for cycling, the risk is that investment for walking will be given much less prominence.
6. In practical terms, this means that investment in routine pedestrian infrastructure needs to be given much more priority - wider smoother pavements, easier road crossings, etc. It is these kind of measures, rather than investment in "Active Travel networks" (which is usually code for segregated cycle lanes or cycle paths that people can also walk on), which will make the biggest impact in making whole communities more active. Better ordinary local walking environments will also encourage local shops and a sense of community to thrive.
7. Finally, mention must be made of two important measures which will benefit both walking and cycling: motorised traffic needs to be calmed and discouraged through measures such as 20mph urban speed limits and reduced provision of parking (especially on-street). And planning policy must encourage housing, shops, schools, health care and similar facilities to be sited in local neighbourhoods, so that they are easily reached on foot (or by bike).

David Hunter
Not for Profit Planning
117 Gilmore Place
Edinburgh
EH3 9PP

07810 444080

nfpplan@gmail.com

www.nfpplanning.com