



*Association of Directors of Public Health*

To:

The Right Hon Philip Hammond MP  
Secretary of State for Transport  
Department for Transport  
Great Minster House  
76 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DR

2<sup>nd</sup> June 2010

Dear Mr Hammond

**Re: Making active travel an inter-departmental priority for the new government**

I am writing to welcome you to your appointment as Secretary of State for Transport, on behalf of over 110 leading UK public health, transport and planning organisations, signatories to the Take action on active travel policy call.

You will know of the observed and predicted rise in the cost of healthcare, and the concerns over employee health and productivity, associated with the persistent decline in people's physical activity levels. There is now a global consensus that walking and cycling – for daily trips – are crucial components in any strategy to reverse this trend. Transport therefore has a central role to play in a modern, cross-governmental approach to this public health problem.

We believe that in the coming Parliament your department will have an opportunity to show real leadership, while better allocating precious public funds than has been the case in the past. We see the opportunity to address three major policy areas in one.

- Better transport investment – local infrastructure projects for walking and cycling have been shown (using DfT analytical systems) to deliver benefit to cost ratios around ten times better than conventional road schemes: we believe the case is very strong for a shift in regional and local transport investment to health enhancing travel modes.
- Cutting the cost of treating ill-health – investment in streets that encourage walking and cycling will reduce the costs of physical inactivity, estimated by the Cabinet Office (2009) to cost the economy £9.8 billion per year in English urban areas alone, and attack the growing bill for obesity, which Foresight (2007) predicts at £50 billion by 2050.
- Cutting carbon – we of course support the coalition commitment to a low carbon and eco-friendly economy and the pre-election Conservative proposal for a Carbon Reduction Fund for transport: a shift towards walking, cycling and local public transport should in our view be central to the implementation of this objective and the fund.

We would also urge you to consider to what extent the promotion of active travel could be funded by cross-departmental co-operation. Simply put, a shift in transport capital investment priorities should create more walking and cycling friendly neighbourhoods, while departments such as Health, with more revenue to spend, can support the information and marketing programmes, such as TravelSmart, which support individuals to change their travel behaviour. The cost savings generated in Transport would be more immediate; those in Health accrue over time from a reduced need to treat ill-health.



The Take action on active travel partners have prioritised the reduction of urban speed limits, and this would be our specific policy recommendation to you. Areas with lower vehicle speeds are associated with increased opportunities for walking and cycling, as well as casualty reduction. We therefore strongly urge for a default speed limit in built-up areas of 20 mph. A reduction in motor traffic speed is not the only change needed to make active travel safer, or to encourage further uptake of active modes of transport such as walking and cycling, but it is a key component.

Take action on active travel is led by the Association of Directors of Public Health, the National Heart Forum and Sustrans. We would welcome an opportunity to meet, to discuss the strong case for a shift of transport investment focus towards the health enhancing forms of local transport. Would you please ask your office to let us know some convenient dates.

Yours sincerely

Frank Atherton  
President, Association of Directors of Public Health

On behalf of the following signatories:

Paul Lincoln  
Chief Executive  
National Heart Forum

Malcolm Shepherd  
Chief Executive  
Sustrans

Russell Tipson  
Director  
Action Heart

Nick Cavill  
Director  
Cavill Associates

Ken Fox  
Professor of Exercise and Health Sciences  
Bristol University, Department of Exercise,  
Nutrition, and Health Sciences

Ronan Lyons  
Convenor  
Collaboration for Accident Prevention and Injury  
Control

Professor Jo Doust  
Chair  
British Association of Sport and Exercise  
Sciences (BASES)

Paul Lowe  
[www.cyclinginstructor.com](http://www.cyclinginstructor.com)

Betty McBride  
Director of Policy and Communications  
British Heart Foundation

Philip Mulligan  
Chief Executive  
Environmental Protection UK

Professor Fiona Bull  
BHF National Centre for Physical Activity and  
Health, Loughborough University

Dr Alan Maryon-Davis  
President  
UK Faculty of Public Health

Richard Jarvis  
Chairman  
British Medical Association Public Health  
Medicine Committee

Dr Stephen Watkins  
Director of Public Health Stockport  
on behalf of Greater Manchester DsPH Group

Richard Hebditch  
Campaigns Director  
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Ken Timmis MBE JP LCIE  
President  
Heart Care Partnership (UK)

Robin Ireland  
Chief Executive,  
Heart of Mersey



Koy Thomson  
Chief Executive  
London Cycling Campaign

Paddy Powell  
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National Association for Primary Education

Dr C J Spencer Jones  
Director of Public Health  
NHS South Birmingham

Dr David Pencheon  
Director  
NHS Sustainable Development Unit for England

Dr David Haslam  
Chair  
National Obesity Forum

Miriam Armstrong  
Chief Executive  
PHLink

Adrian Voce  
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Tom Franklin  
Chief Executive  
The Ramblers

Dr John Middleton  
Executive Director of Public Health  
Sandwell Primary Care Trust

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Jamie Wallace  
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Chris Mayes  
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Warrington Cycle Campaign

Janet Paske  
Manager  
Wheels for Wellbeing

Kate Allen  
Director, Science and Communications  
World Cancer Research Fund International

David Nussbaum  
Chief Executive  
WWF-UK

Rod King  
Founder  
20's Plenty for Us

cc: The Right Hon Andrew Lansley MP  
Secretary of State for Health