

Press Notice: Issued Monday 31 March 2014.

Safer networks and lower speeds needed to promote walking and cycling and tackle obesity crisis, says Parliamentary safety group.

Central Government and local authorities need to dramatically step up road safety measure if their policies for increased walking and cycling are to be realised without increasing casualties, according to a report by the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety out tomorrow (1st April).

1st April 2014 is the first anniversary of the return to local government of responsibility for public health (previously with Primary Care Trusts). A study by PACTS of expert opinion across road safety, sustainable transport and public health sectors shows that working more closely together will be essential in the future, particularly in face of further government spending cuts.

PACTS executive director David Davies said, "The return of public health to local government has presented a tremendous opportunity to achieve better road safety, more active travel and healthier people and towns. Given the further cuts in local government spending that are on the way, working together may be the only way for these services to survive and deliver results. Government has set out policies to reduce casualties, encourage walking and cycling and to tackle obesity. But they have not backed them with sufficient action or joined-up working in Whitehall. If safety is not improved through safer infrastructure provision, effective speed management, improved road user training and other measures, more walking and cycling may lead to more casualties on Britain's roads."

The full report *Achieving Safety, Sustainability and Health Goals in Transport* will be released tomorrow on the PACTS website <http://www.pacts.org.uk/> A Summary is attached. A pre-publication copy is available on request from PACTS. The research was supported by the Ashden Trust and British Cycling.

NOTES

1. **The Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety (PACTS)** is a registered charity and an associate Parliamentary Group. Its charitable objective is "To protect human life through the promotion of transport safety for the public benefit".
2. **Further information:** David Davies, executive director, 020 7222 7732 and david.davies@pacts.org.uk

Report Summary: *Achieving Safety, Sustainability and Health Goals in Transport*, 31 March 2014

For some years now there have been calls for greater alignment of policy and practice across the road safety, sustainable transport and public health sectors. On 1st April 2013 responsibility for public health was transferred from the NHS to local authorities. This has presented an opportunity to deliver road safety, sustainable transport and public health initiatives in a more integrated and effective way. This report, drawing on the views of a cross section of experts and focusing on local transport, shows that, one year on, progress has been made but much more is needed.

Policy, necessity and public opinion are driving change at national and local level towards a more integrated approach. Concerns about obesity and poor air quality, the need to reduce carbon emissions and resurgence in interest in cycling have given a boost to investment in local sustainable transport. At the same time, road safety funding cuts and reductions in the number of people killed or injured on the roads have led many local authorities to merge a reduced road safety staff with sustainable travel teams.

Road safety needs to be pursued in a broad multi-sectoral context since it cuts across public health and sustainable transport (as well as occupational health and safety) agendas. Road traffic collisions are a major public health issue and the largest single source of death for people aged 5-25 years in the UK.¹ More needs to be done not only to prevent death and serious injuries, the vast majority of which are largely avoidable but also to make people feel safer so that the public health agenda and the public's aspirations for safer mobility can be fulfilled.

Despite the statements of common policy objectives, there is still insufficient alignment between these sectors in practice to realise the substantial co-benefits of coordinated action. Public health and sustainable transport emphasise the health and environmental benefits of walking and cycling while the road safety is concerned that insufficient effort and investment are being made to prevent death and serious injury and that increases in these vulnerable modes may lead to more casualties. Closer integration and synergy at national and local level is needed.

The long term decline in active travel, particularly walking, and the increases in obesity show that significant and structural change is needed.² Behavioural change initiatives are not enough. While cycling has become the poster-boy of sustainable transport, walking lags behind, despite its much wider potential appeal and benefits. It is also a higher priority for casualty reduction. Public transport also seems to be failing to capitalise on its safety and health advantages.

This report calls on the Government to show more leadership and joined-up working at national level and to recognise that the desired changes (healthier lifestyles, more active travel, safer road use) will require long-term planning and investment in physical infrastructure. It is imperative that the efforts to encourage walking and cycling are accompanied by safer infrastructure provision, effective speed management and improved road user training. The report also calls for the Departments of Transport and Health to jointly publish improved information about walking and cycling journeys and the health benefits and risks of the main travel modes. At local level it recommends a series of measures to improve cross-sector working and understanding.

¹ IHME, *Global Burden of Disease: Generating Evidence, Guiding Policy*, Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation, University of Washington, Seattle, USA, 2013

² DfT, [National Travel Survey: 2012](#), September 2013