



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Regional Development

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Inquiry into the Benefits of Cycling to the
Economy: All-party Group on Cycling

2 July 2014

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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Northern Ireland Assembly All-party Group on Cycling

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Jimmy Spratt (Chairperson)
Mr Seán Lynch (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Joe Byrne
Mr John Dallat
Mr Alex Easton
Mrs Brenda Hale
Mr Ross Hussey
Mr Declan McAleer
Mr Kieran McCarthy
Mr David McNarry
Mr Cathal Ó hOisín

Witnesses:

Mr Lyttle	MLA - East Belfast
Mrs Overend	MLA - Mid Ulster
Mr McKay	MLA - North Antrim

The Chairperson: You are no strangers to the Committee system. Chris Lyttle, you are the chair of the all-party group, and you are joined by Daithí McKay and Sandra Overend. You are all very welcome. You are all keen cyclists and know that we have had this ongoing inquiry. It has been a very positive inquiry, with a lot of people coming along. In fact, we have had to extend the period of the inquiry, so there is a lot of interest and a lot more needs to be done in the area. Chris, I ask you to make a short presentation and then — the hard bit — leave yourself open for questions.

Mr Chris Lyttle (Northern Ireland Assembly): Thanks very much, Chair. Thank you for the opportunity to meet the Committee today in our capacity as members of the all-party group (APG) on cycling. Chair, I commend yourself and the Committee for the work you have undertaken in the cycling inquiry: it is fantastic to see attention being given to the issue. We have tabled a short paper, and we will speak to it very briefly.

The all-party group on cycling was formed in May 2013 and aims to bring MLAs, cyclists, cycling organisations and other key stakeholders together to raise awareness of cycling amongst MLAs and support the development of effective cycling policies and provision in order to contribute to increased cycling in Northern Ireland. The APG includes MLAs from almost all parties in the Assembly. Hopefully, that will be "all parties" in the near future.

As part of Bike Week 2014 and with the aim of mobilising people to contribute to the all-party group on cycling's submission to the Committee's inquiry, we held a round-table discussion. Approximately 40 individuals and organisations joined us here in Parliament Buildings in June. The round table was also addressed by the Minister for Regional Development, Danny Kennedy MLA, and we were assisted by the regional cycling charity Sustrans NI. We considered three key barriers to cycling that had been identified by the Travelwise NI survey: bike ownership, infrastructure and safety, and weather. Our paper sets out the views of participants on those barriers and the actions that they believe could be taken to overcome them. We will speak briefly on the three issues. Sandra Overend MLA will speak about bike ownership, Daithí McKay MLA will speak about infrastructure and safety, and I will make some brief comments about weather before concluding. I hand over to Sandra.

Mrs Sandra Overend (Northern Ireland Assembly): Thanks, Chris. The meeting raised some interesting ideas about bike ownership, which was identified as a major barrier to increasing cycling participation.

The bike-to-work scheme was recognised as helping to make bike ownership more affordable, but there are improvements that could be made to it. Inconsistent employer participation, the lengthy application process and the limit of one bicycle per participant were noted as limitations of the scheme. A lack of assistance for the unemployed was also noted as a barrier to bike ownership that should be addressed.

Some of the proposals from the meeting on how to improve bike ownership are listed in our paper. They include access to more affordable trade-in and refurbished bike purchase opportunities; access to bike maintenance and repair training; the removal of VAT on all bicycles rather than having a bike-to-work scheme, which would mean that access would be available to everyone; and try-before-you-buy opportunities, because some people have not been on a bicycle since their childhood and are not sure if they would be able to make it down the road.

It was also suggested that there should be wider access to bike hire, such as the Belfast bike-hire scheme. Free bikes was an idea raised that we thought we had better bring to you. Bike storage in car parking spaces and housing complexes were also raised at the meeting.

Mr Daithí McKay (Northern Ireland Assembly): Infrastructure and safety, and safety in particular, are big issues. In the past three weeks, three children, aged five, 10 and 12, have been involved in accidents in the city, one of which was fatal. Given that there has been an increase in cycling, and that there is a continuing increase, the number of accidents will increase unless we make infrastructural changes in response to the growing proportion of cyclists on our roads.

Some issues raised cited lack of infrastructure as being a major discouragement for cyclists in the North. In recent days, figures came out in England concerning London, showing that a lot of people would like to cycle but do not do so because they do not feel that it is safe.

In terms of attitudes, we need to guard against some of the examples we have seen elsewhere, where it is cyclists versus taxi drivers or motorists. Most cyclists are motorists, so we have to be very careful that there is not an issue and that attitudes do not develop that are negative for everybody concerned. The Department of the Environment's advertisement has been quite useful in encouraging mutual respect between road users.

Some of the proposed actions that came from the round-table discussion included increased access to fit-for-purpose, traffic-free cycle lanes. That was regarded as an urgent priority. Those lanes are few and far between. There are some terrible examples in the city centre, where lorries are parked in the lanes throughout the day. The operation of those lanes is not being enforced.

There are cyclists who want to use the cycle lanes but find that, because there are cars or vehicles parked in them that they are forced out into the middle of the road. So, there is always the issue of whether a cyclist should stay in the cycle lane or use the entire side of the road. Cyclists do use the whole of the road in the interests of their own safety, which is something that there needs to be a growing awareness of amongst motorists.

In terms of bike racks on buses and trains, there are a lot of rural dwellers like me who come into the city and might cycle from somewhere in the country to a train or bus station, get the train, get off and cycle elsewhere. Sometimes you can get the bike on the bus or the train: it depends on where you are. There are differences between the Derry to Belfast train line in the morning and the lines from

Belfast to Portadown or Bangor, where, at certain times, you are not allowed bicycles on the train. That is obviously a negative as well.

You will be aware that there is a private Member's Bill on the introduction of a 20 mph speed limit. This is a big issue for the safety of the cycling community. There is a need for improved driver and cyclist education and training and for level 2 road cycling proficiency training for more primary school pupils.

We also looked at some good examples of cycling infrastructure, and Stranmillis embankment was flagged up as a particularly good example.

As for tourism, I believe that the Committee was in Mayo to look at the Great Western Greenway. The Comber greenway is also a great example, but we need more of that not only for the local population but for tourists. There is a good example of an old railway track between Ballymoney and Ballycastle. The Minister is not going to give me a train connection to Ballycastle, unfortunately, so we should look instead at providing a tourist trail for cyclists and pedestrians alike.

Mr Lyttle: There was general agreement that weather concerns were a misconception. There are other misconceptions about the image of cycling, which act as a barrier to cycling, but we need to send out a clear message that other regions with similar climates and rainfall have successfully increased participation across the board.

Some of the proposed actions to overcome weather and image-related concerns included the following: improved access to changing and storage facilities; improved cycle lane maintenance during bad weather and in general; the provision of cycling-related information as well as motor traffic information during radio traffic updates, which was a novel idea; the need to change the perception that cyclists must be Lycra-clad professionals and promote cycling in more everyday normal clothing; and the need to improve access to different types of bikes and assist people when they purchase a bike to ensure that it is suitable for them and their journeys. Those are the three key issues that we worked on at the round-table.

I am conscious that the inquiry's terms of reference cover the examination of existing cycling provision and the Executive's capacity and performance in delivering against transport, environment, health, sport and the economy. The Programme for Government for 2011-15 seems to have just one explicit reference to cycling, which is to increase school travel by cycling. Yet, it has five key themes: economic growth; health and well-being; environment; shared community; and public services. In our mind, cycling can make a key contribution to all of those. We hope that the next Programme for Government will include, as a result of the good work that the Committee is doing, much more explicit targeting for cycling.

We welcome the establishment of the DRD cycling unit and the opportunities that should come from the Giro d'Italia legacy plan, but we think that one of the key issues, ultimately, is the need for a fundamental change in the level of investment. We have information that, for example, the DRD eastern division budget for 2012-13 was £250 million, £200,000 of which was for cycling. I think that that equates to 0.0008% of the budget. So, there is a clear need for a fundamental change in that regard.

In conclusion, we believe that the benefits and opportunities of cycling are wide and many, that there is gathering momentum behind the growth of cycling and that there is a need for action and investment to meet the demand for improved and imaginative cycling provision.

The Chairperson: Thank you very much indeed, Chris. We will start off with some questions. Being a Chair who likes to break with protocol, I will bring in Georgia James for a question. She was recently in Berlin, and she wants to ask you a question first. I will bring her in, and then, if members will forgive me for that, we will then move to members.

Miss Georgia James (Brighton College): I have recently been to Berlin, which has quite a similar climate to Northern Ireland, and bike tours of the city are really popular. I was wondering whether you had visited many other areas that are very dependent on cycling for tourism. If there were bike tours around the key cities and key areas, what impact do you think that would have in Northern Ireland?

Mr Lyttle: I will lead, and you can maybe give my colleagues the opportunity as well. I think that there is significant opportunity. In my constituency of East Belfast, the East Belfast Partnership is doing

some travel at the moment to fact find in relation to cycling cafes. It is hoping that plans to introduce a cycling cafe workshop in east Belfast will encourage that type of cycling tourism. As colleagues mentioned, with facilities like the Comber greenway, the Lagan towpath and the rural areas that are to be developed, we have a really good cycling product that we should be marketing further and taking advantage of from a tourist point of view.

Mrs Overend: I think that there are opportunities for private sector businesses to set up. We have heard of other places where bike-hire schemes were set up. You hire a bike here, and you can leave it off at the next stage and get the bus back. Things like that are working elsewhere. I know from when I went to Boston that the bicycle is a great way of getting around that city. There are great opportunities for Northern Ireland if we can promote the tourism aspect.

Mr McKay: Bike hire schemes are really taking off across the States as well. Obviously, London is the big example, and we will have our own local scheme. My only concern about the one in Belfast is that I saw a map of the stations, and they will all be in the city centre. If I were to come into the city, I would not use it because I could walk between one station and the other. It would not be worth my while using a bike. Personally, I would have preferred them to have been spread out up the Newtownards Road and up the Antrim Road so that more people in the communities could use them as well.

On the matter of tourism, we need to look at the issue of the greenways. Mayo is a good example, and we should do that in Derry, and, as I said, from Ballycastle to Ballymoney so that there is a connection in that, if you get off in the city, you get the train or the bus to another station and you can then go straight on a bicycle to Ballycastle and the Glens etc.

The Chairperson: What do you think that the Department's priorities should be in the development of cycling? It is a bit piecemeal at the minute, and we are not very sure about finances around it. How do you think that that can be improved for the future?

Mr Lyttle: I agree, Chair. I gave the example of the low scale of financing that we are seeing for cycling, and, what came through in our meetings and consultation sessions was that there is an urgent need to prioritise infrastructure improvements but that there were other ways to get quick gains. From the point of view of image, it came through that everyday cycling needs to be promoted and made more accessible to the public as well. So, there is need for key, urgent infrastructural change, but other campaigning can be done to increase everyday cycling and improve training in schools to make sure that young people are competent and comfortable with cycling as well.

The Chairperson: Chris, we were very impressed with the presentation from the Connswater Community Greenway and by the fact that about £48 million has been spent on that new project. We heard about the conversations that the folks in the project have had with local communities and, indeed, also in relation to health. In some areas, there is a very poor health record. Have you any comments to make on that? Obviously, you are very close to that as a Member for East Belfast.

Mr Lyttle: I wholeheartedly agree. I think that the work that Connswater Community Greenway has done is outstanding in connecting with universities to back up the health benefits of recycling. Research has been done and will be done to support the funding that it has received on those grounds. There is a connection to local schools along the route of the Connswater community greenway. It will reconnect communities as well. An observation that was coming back, however, was that we have to find ways to make sure that those excellent greenways are connected to the existing infrastructure as well. At times, they can be slightly isolated from arterial routes but that is not going to be the case for Connswater Community Greenway. We need to make sure that those greenways take you from key A to B points as well as connecting communities in other ways.

Mr McKay: I want to talk about health, with my DFP hat on. The Finance Committee looked at Civil Service sickness rates, and the Institute of Public Health appeared before us as well. A healthier workforce has lower sickness rates and improved productivity; it does all these things. The health budget is growing and it is going to expand further because our lifestyle at the moment is one of convenience; it is an inactive lifestyle. Anything that we can do to undo some of the cultural changes over the past 30 years will lead to fewer pressures on our health service and will free up more funding.

Look at the money that is spent on the roads infrastructure, for example. Cars do more damage to the roads than bicycles, so, if you can get an extra 10 commuters in Belfast to go on bikes instead of cars, over time you will save money on damage done to the roads. If you have 20 cars parked in traffic

behind a red light, it will take a while for them to process through, but 20 cyclists will go through quicker, so traffic will go through more smoothly as well.

The evidence is all there in that regard; my concern is with the Department. The Minister talked about the revolution that he undertook last September. We are coming towards the end of the honeymoon period, as I would look at it. We need to see changes on the ground and proper infrastructures put in place so that people feel safe. If schoolchildren feel safe going to school, people will sooner leave the car at home.

Mr Lyttle: May I supplement that briefly? The Public Health Agency has invested in cycling as well, which shows that there is an opportunity for cross-departmental coordination and investment in cycling. I am thinking of Ballybeen men's motivational group, which has linked in with Sustrans and the East Belfast Community Development Agency (EBCDA) to have cycling clubs in Ballybeen for men. That is targeting some of the most hard-to-reach groups of people around whom we need to target investment to improve their health outcomes. There is a real opportunity for cycling to make a contribution to improving social and health-related outcomes in key areas.

The Chairperson: OK, thanks for that.

Mr Lynch: You mentioned the Department's cycling unit, which was set up fairly recently. In your view, what role should that unit have in promoting cycling? Daithí talked about not getting the bike on the train; going by last week's experience, would it not be that you could cycle and beat the train? *[Laughter.]*

Mr McKay: That is a good point; I will not be trying it anyway.

I get the train from the Ballymoney and Ballymena area down into Belfast in the morning and the train staff are absolutely fantastic. However, there are a lot of concerns. People from Portadown and Bangor would like to take the bike on the train in the morning, but unless they have a folding bike, which is quite expensive, they are not allowed to do so and that option is closed to them.

There are a number of examples in Europe of how different train companies put equipment in so that you can stand the cycle up on its end, which takes up less space. I know that Translink has said that it cannot accommodate cyclists on the buses unless you throw it in the boot of one of the Goldliners. I met representatives of Wrightbus, which is in my constituency, who told me that this equipment, which can be hitched onto the back of a bus, has already been designed in America. It should be rolled out here. I am going to meet Translink about that issue. That is one of the easy things that we can do; there is no controversy about getting a unit onto the back of bus that you can throw your bike on. That is something that should already have been done a year on, in my opinion.

Mr Lynch: What about the cycling unit?

Mr Lyttle: The cycling unit is a welcome development, as is work to develop a cycling strategy. I agree with Daithí; we need to see quick actions, quick wins and quick responses to some of those issues. It is my understanding that an officer has been appointed to cycle-proof all departmental policy. The Chair mentioned the potential health benefits as well. That cycle-proofing could be done across many Executive issues to ensure that opportunities to make gains for cycling provision are achieved when the policy is in formulation rather than afterwards when it gets a bit more difficult. Hopefully, it will be a useful addition to the Executive.

Mr Ó hOisín: Sandra, I see that, in your constituency, from the Castledawson roundabout to Magherafelt, there is a double-lane footpath/cycle path along the left hand side of the road. How essential do you think provision for cycling at design stage is when planning any new road improvements?

Mrs Overend: That is probably the way forward. The Department should consider cycling in the decisions it makes for all roads. It is a fantastic provision between Castledawson and Magherafelt and hopefully it will encourage more people to cycle in that area. The balance has to be between whether we integrate cyclists on the road or on the pavement. The Department has to find that balance for cyclists; whether they feel safer on the road with the traffic and with the traffic respecting them, or whether it is better for them to be on the pavement.

Mr Ó hOisín: Across Europe, the EuroVelo route has been lauded as the premier tourist cycling mixed product. I have mentioned it a couple of times here. I think that perhaps it exists more on paper than in reality here. If you look at the EuroVelo route from Belfast to Derry, out over Glenshane, you will see that that is hardly conducive to that whole product. Is there a piece of work to be done to develop routes other than that one, perhaps up around the north coast, perhaps the one that Daithí mentioned from Ballycastle to Ballymoney or elsewhere? Do you think that there is a large piece of work to be done there?

Mr McKay: I do not know what you are referring to, Cathal.

Mr Ó hOisín: The EuroVelo route is a route in western Europe, which stretches from Norway to Portugal and includes part of the west coast of Scotland, from Belfast to Derry, down the west coast of Ireland and then down through France and Europe. It is something that has not grabbed the imagination here. Indeed, some people have not even heard of it.

Mr McKay: I am a clear example of that. *[Laughter.]* The north coast obviously straddles both of our constituencies, Cathal, and you are aware of the number of cyclists who are going to that new cycle way in Mayo. To have a cycle route along the north coast and past the Causeway, the views would be fantastic. There would not have to be a massive piece of infrastructure built. Certain parts of routes are dangerous, but you could have a cycle lane for a certain stretch of road. It needs to be looked at more strategically.

I think that the problem with Roads Service is that it looks at roads from the perspective of cars. It has always been very car-centric, and bicycles have been an afterthought. That is why you have all these wee strange bits of cycle infrastructure that are essentially tokenistic and do not work.

Sandra referred to footpaths and whether cyclists should go on to footpaths or use the road. I know of one example recently in Kilrea, at the Bann bridge, where there is a footpath that has been there for years and all that Roads Service did was put a lick of paint down and stuck up a sign saying "Bicycles and Pedestrians". I will not be using it. It might be safe for families to use it, but if you go on to the footpath you have to cross over the road and it is more bother going through all that palaver than just cycling straight ahead on the road. People need to think through the practicalities as well. There are a number of examples where you will go on to a footpath that acts as a cycle-path and then, all of a sudden, when you come to a junction, you have to give way to traffic coming out from various estates and different things, whereas the common sense thing to do is to stay on the road so that you do not have to give way to anybody. These things need to be thought through.

Mr Lyttle: Cathal, you are absolutely right. There is a job to do to market and promote the networks that we have. That was one of the key things we got through feedback; that we need to have improved information on our cycle networks, whether it is maps or apps. That would definitely help to gear a product that we could promote locally, on a European basis and internationally.

Mrs Hale: In the recent past, cycling was seen as a way to counteract petrol prices for people who could not afford to run two cars. In fact, my hubby cycled to and from work because we could not afford to run two cars. The Minto report was published in 2010. On Monday, Jamie Fewery wrote in 'The Daily Telegraph' an article about why cycling attracts so many middle-class snobs. He called it the sport of snobbery. I guess that it is because of the price of bikes and wheels, the type of gear you wear, the shoes you wear and what cycling events you go to watch. How can we counteract that and make it a more inclusive sport, given that, because you have carbon and aluminium bikes, it can be so expensive? How can we put it into the reach of everyone?

Mr McKay: Something raised at the meeting we had was the fact that, if you go into a bicycle shop, you get sporty bikes and carbon bikes, all of which cost thousands of pounds. However, if you go to the Netherlands and places like that, there are practical bikes with baskets on the front designed more for — I was going to say "normal people". You can find a bike that suits your everyday needs, such as going to the shops etc. Also, if you go to a bicycle shop, you can buy a bike without any additions. If you had the option to buy a bicycle with pannier bags and all the things you need, such as mudguards etc, more people would be inclined to buy them. As you say, it is about un-peeling some of the culture that has built up over the past 30 years. Thirty years ago, people aspired to have a car; it was a sign that you were progressing socially etc. We need to see now that having a bicycle and being active is key to your health and well-being rather than being something that is frowned on, as it still is to a large degree in society.

Mrs Overend: Just to add to that, imaging is the key to this. The Department recognises that and is working to try to change the image of cycling so that it is not the Lycra-clad people. I do not know whether I should say this, but you do not always have to wear a helmet; you can just hop on your bike and nip down to the shop. Obviously, you should always wear your helmet.

In Copenhagen, people cycle to work in their normal gear, and they cycle in snow and all types of weather. You see photographs coming through. We need to promote those photographs in Northern Ireland because there are people doing that as well; we just need to get that message across. We have a job to do on the image of cycling. Not everyone who cycles is fit; I am certainly not fit. It is about getting out there with your family and cycling every day.

Mr McKay: The important point in integrating cycling into your day-to-day life for work, especially in the public sector, is that people need showers and changing facilities. I took the bicycle to work this morning. I would not have been able to do so if there was not a shower upstairs, changing facilities and somewhere to park the bike out the back. Not everybody has those options, and not everybody is going to avail themselves of them. However, if you give people the choice and the infrastructure, in terms of parking, as well, they will be more likely to make those choices.

Mr McAleer: Some of this was touched on just a second ago. Modal shift is the big thing. Obviously, for cycling to be sustainable, you need to get people to use it for everyday purposes. I was in Portland in the USA at Easter time. When they are planning houses and public facilities, the first thing they put in are the cycle lanes. It is all planned. They have even developed apartments over there that do not have car-parking spaces; the cycle lane is all integrated into it. People are cycling to work. They are not Lycra-clad; it is just a normal thing. I find it intriguing that people around home might cycle 70 miles but drive half a mile to the shop for a loaf. I recently got a bicycle through the Assembly's cycle-to-work scheme, which is very good.

The Chairperson: Remember that it is questions — no statements. *[Laughter.]*

Mr McAleer: What more can be done to encourage that modal shift? I note that the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, has done a great deal of work to normalise cycling. What more can be done? That is needed in order to make it more sustainable in the long term.

Mr Lyttle: As you say, the design stage must prioritise cycling infrastructure. People need to feel safe in order to take the journeys. Affordability is also an issue. Those are key ways to try to address that. There also needs to be an attitudinal change. Statistics show that a startling number of journeys are short. If we could encourage people to see that cycling is affordable and safe and that it is an active, environmentally friendly way to make those short journeys, more of them would make that choice.

Mr McKay: You also need to get businesses to buy into this as well. There are numerous cycling clubs on the north coast. One local business in Portglenone, The Rose Cafe, has put cycle parking bays outside its premises. Now, any cyclist coming through — typically your weekend cyclist going for 40 or 50 miles — has the option of parking and going in for a coffee and, obviously, the business is making a profit.

This applies in the city centre as well. I cycled into the city centre last night. I cycled down to Botanic, and the first thing I thought was, "Where can I park my bike?" I could not see anywhere to park near the cafe I was going to, so I had to park at Queen's and walk down. That was an inconvenience, and it means that I am less likely to stop and do business there again. The same applies to the car parking argument. I think that cycle loops have been put in the city centre, and they were filled up the right way. It does not cost a fortune to put in a cycle loop. The more of those you have, not only in the city but in rural areas like Omagh, Dungiven and places like that, the more cyclists will use them.

The 212 bus from Derry stops in Dungiven and Toome. If there were cycle spaces or somewhere to park your bike at the stop in Dungiven, for example, people from the country would be more likely to cycle to that spot and get on the bus to go to work in Derry.

Mr Lyttle: There are some innovative concepts around sacrificing one car parking space for a secure cycling parking unit where you could, maybe, get 10 bikes in creatively. I think that we could connect with businesses to persuade them of the benefits of improving access from that point of view.

The Chairperson: There are a few members still to come in, and we are basically out of time. Chris, you can manage your end of the table, and one person can answer a question from here on in.

Mr McCarthy: I will be brief; I have a couple of questions. *[Laughter.]* I will be very brief. The idea of a cycling champion has been mooted. Do you support that? What are the advantages of having one? Your briefing paper contains a number of suggestions for overcoming the barriers to cycling, one of which is having free bikes. Brenda is just after speaking into my ear and telling me that her husband's bike cost five grand. Who will pay for free bikes?

Mr Lyttle: Not all bikes cost five grand. I am aware of other areas where this has been given serious consideration. Where there are difficulties with affordability, it is something that should be given serious thought.

We should all be cycling champions. There was also a tongue-in-cheek suggestion in relation to free bikes; it was suggested that we should give them to well-known people and celebrities, and have them cycling around the community in order to have an impact. Champions are absolutely essential, and with some of our local cyclists achieving great things in Giro d'Italia and other competitions, there is something to build upon.

Mr Dallat: It seems to me that there are two types of cyclists: the boy or girl on the expensive bicycle and expensive uniform, and all of that; and the ordinary person on the ordinary bike. It is not cool to cycle; it is still not cool. How do you break that down? You can talk about all these wonderful rallies and things round the world, which focus on champions and stuff like that, but then there is the ordinary person who wants to wander around on his bike. How do you break down the attitude of it not being cool, and that people should leave the bike at home and walk rather than cycle, Chris?

Mr Lyttle: I think that it is increasingly cool actually. A lot of grass roots work is being done. Organisations like NI Greenways and the Fréd Festival have held some really innovative events during Bike Week and throughout the year to bring a cycling community together, increasingly so. They are organisations that the Committee, the Department and the all-party group can connect with to see how they are making cycling accessible and interesting to young people and people across the board.

Mrs Overend: We could maybe bring in the likes of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board to help promote cycling opportunities around Northern Ireland, to change that image of cycling and to show that it is available for ordinary people.

Mr Dallat: You talked a lot about infrastructure and stuff like that, and Georgia mentioned Berlin, which I have seen. There is infrastructure and paintings on the footpaths, but there is coexistence and no antagonism. You mentioned the cycle lane in Kilrea. You are likely to be told, "Hump off on to the middle of the road with that thing". How do you break that down so that there is respect for cyclists who are sharing a space with people who are walking?

Mr Lyttle: We need a huge attitudinal change, and one suggestion at our event was that, at training stage, whether it is cycling proficiency stage or driver testing and training stage, we have much more robust messaging and training around mutual respect on our roads and the right that everyone has to share those roads in safety. It will be a hugely important issue in increasing participation.

Mr Byrne: Do you have any thoughts on how the level 2 proficiency for P6 pupils can be promoted in schools and on how to train young people, particularly for cycling on the road rather than in the schoolyard?

Mr Lyttle: I am saying a lot here. If you two want to jump in, go ahead. I am conscious of the lead from the Chair.

The key is to have on-road cycling proficiency training for our young people, and my understanding is that, as part of Giro d'Italia legacy plan, there are proposals to set a specific target of 50% of all P6 pupils to have that level 2 on-road cycle training. The all-party group and the Committee should support that.

Mr Hussey: I will declare an interest because, many years ago, I failed my driving test first time for failing to give adequate clearance to a cyclist, and I have never held that grudge since. *[Laughter.]* Do you believe that, as this progresses and people become more cycling-proficient, laws should perhaps

be changed? Some cyclists seem to think that they have a bicycle and can take it wherever they like, such as footpaths, which is one my pet hates. Also, when sitting at traffic lights and the lights go red, they go onto the crossing and decide to use that instead. That causes problems for pedestrians and drivers. Do you think that perhaps there should be a licensing scheme for cyclists so that, if they break the rules, they can eventually be put off because of that?

Mr McKay: Cyclists sometimes do not have a choice. You will get badly behaved cyclists, as you get badly behaved motorists. Take the example of the Albert Bridge heading over to Central Station and into Belfast. There is a point where cyclists and buses have right of way and the two lanes merge, but the cars believe that they have right of way and there have been a few near misses with cyclists. So, a lot of cyclists go up on the kerb because they do not feel safe on the road, but, if you make those roads safe, cyclists should not be on the footpaths. It is a bit of a catch-22. If you make the roads safe enough, cyclists should not be on the footpath. I never go on the footpath, but I was in Botanic last night speaking to a cyclist from Dunloy and he said that, up in the country, it is no problem cycling around the roads. It is a lot safer in the country than it is in the city. That is why cyclists are on the footpaths there. They feel that they have no other choice. They do not feel safe, and, given the high rate of accidents involving cyclists, you can understand that.

The Chairperson: I thank Sandra, Chris and Daithí for the presentation. I am sure that you will look with interest at our report. There are some further questions that we were not quite able to get to. The Clerk will write to you with them. It is important that we get stuff on record from the all-party group so that it can be included in the report. We will do that in the not too distant future, and I would appreciate it if you could reply to us. In the meantime, I thank all three of you very much.