

Transcript of discussion on segregated cycle tracks, 24th January - 8th February 2007

24th January. Jean Dollimore

The main topic for this meeting will be a discussion on the benefits/ problems of segregated cycle tracks, starting at 8 pm.

Paul Braithwaite is planning to do a study of attitudes and experience of segregated cycle lanes, with a view to expanding the network. He has agreed to come to our February meeting participate in a discussion on segregation.

After Paul has introduced the topics and reported on Camden officer's current views on the topic, we hope to have a lively discussion addressing the following:

- the recognised arguments for and against,
- find out about members experiences
- set some parameters as to when segregated cycle tracks might be a good idea
- and possibly think of some suitable locations.

24th January. Tony Raven

I can't go but FWIW I wrote up my views for the Cambridge Cycling Campaign. They are available at

<http://www.camcycle.org.uk/newsletters/66/article8.html>

25th January. Paul Gannon

Most CCC members will be familiar with my views on this subject, but I want to challenge a point made by Tony Raven in his article as he is new to CCC and probably wont have heard this before.

There is NO evidence to suggest that cycle tracks are less safe than mixing it with motor traffic. A reference to Franklins website is not evidence. I have looked in detail at his site and looked closely at his claims, but they simply dont stack up. His use of evidence is extremely poor and often thoroughly misleading. I have written before in detail analysing this, but still this website is cited as The Truth simply because of who he is.

I have repeatedly (literally scores of times) asked LCC members who repeated such claims to cite primary evidence to support their assertions. No one ever backed up their claims, or if they attempted to do so, the claim would evaporate on closer examination.

For example a study in the Netherlands was widely cited, but when I looked at the original study it turned out that the accident stats that were frequently cited were actually about moped users and the study specifically

stated that there was no difference in stats about bicycle users! Another example was a widely cited article from Cycling Plus magazine which claimed that cycle paths were 14 times more dangerous than cycling on the road. I eventually got hold of the executive summary of this research and discovered that it referred to mountain biking tracks, not cycle paths!

I put the same challenge forward to Tony can you cite any primary evidence that you have seen? Or is your view based entirely on secondary citations from someones website?

Also, how do you explain that, in those countries where you have extensive provision of cycle tracks, (this assertion is based on OECD statistics which I can cite in detail if necessary) you find more cyclists, a better safety

record AND, of crucial importance, a much better age and gender profile of cyclists? (These stats show that the UK nationally has about 9:1 men:women cyclists and a heavy age bulge around 18-35, while countries such as the

Netherlands, Finland, etc have a near balance of the genders and a much, much higher proportion of older people in the cyclists profile.)

26th January. Tony Raven

New to CCC maybe but by no means new to cycle campaigning and not new to the pro facility arguements. Apart from that one quibble on cycle facility safety do you agree or disagree with the rest of the arguments I put forward?

John's site is a convenient bibliography. But it is not the only source and there are a number of other papers in the literature that support the proposition. I would never rely on secondary citations on a web site. You might like to consider Kaplan* and the follow up by Moritz, or Aultman-Hall & Hall (Accid. Anal. and Prev. 30(1) 29-43, 1998, not cited by Franklin) that says:

"The relative rates for falls and injuries suggest it is safest to cycle on-road followed by off-road paths and trails, and finally least safe on sidewalks."

Or Garder et al's meta-analysis of cycle path safety at junctions

([http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0001-4575\(94\)90034-5](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0001-4575(94)90034-5), not cited by Franklin) that says:

"The conclusion that can be drawn so far from combining results shows that the most likely effect of introducing a cycle path is that the risk will increase by about 40% for a passing cyclist. The probability that the effect will be the opposite, i.e. that the risk will decrease, is very small (about 2%)."

I could go on about other types of facility but am sensitive to people's boredom thresholds on topics like this.

I don't (try to explain) but to claiming some causal relationship is very dodgy when there are many well known confounding factors involved. For example the well known supra-linear relationship between numbers cycling and safety will lead to greater safety in the Netherlands just because more people cycle. In fact if you adjusted on that basis for the the Dutch cycling 12 time further p.a. than the British, it would make cycling in the Netherlands 1.8 times less safe than the UK on a like for like basis.

^ "Off-street bicycle facilities (that do not allow motor vehicles) showed the highest overall accident rate, and also an extremely high serious accident rate. In fact the serious accident rate of 79.5 incidents per million bicycle miles was the highest calculated for any analysis done in the study" Actually it was double that for major roads (Table 13) and while on-road cycle facilities come out lower, a back of the envelope shows the difference is not a statistically significant difference.

29th January. David Arditti

Surely that's missing the point, though. The question is, what are the factors in environment and public policy that create these high cycling levels in TN and like countries, that create the safer environment, and which we should copy here?

I am sure that there are many factors involved, but, to claim, as Franklin and others of his view do, that the segregated cycle facilities provided in these places have nothing to do with it (and actually make cycling more dangerous) is completely bizarre and counter-evidential, and I think would seem so to the many Britons who would never dream of cycling on the roads here, but happily go on holiday to Holland and cycle around on the tracks, paths and roads there.

Small-scale statistical studies of danger (or rather crashes) in particular road environments with and without cycle facilities (nearly always American) do not really influence the argument for me. They cannot mimic or analyse the factors operating when whole societies cycle, the "confounding factors" as Tony calls them, which are vital. Particularly vital is the age-gender balance issue, that Paul mentions, which the anti-segregationists never address. I certainly feel this as I get older. I do not want to take my chances in the traffic flow on the Staples Corner flyover any more, and if that's the only option that is on offer (as it is), I will take public transport instead.

Anyway, we have gone on and on about this in the past, so I will cut it there.

29th January. Ralph Thomas

I think that it is hard to draw inferences either from small-scale studies or from international comparisons. For example,

- are there more cyclists in NL because of the off-road facilities, or more facilities because there are more cyclists who want/need them.
- are British tourists more ready to cycle in NL than UK because of the tracks or because more people cycle

My guess is that new cyclists are encouraged by segregated tracks, and these therefore serve a purpose for all of us (and society as a whole) by increasing the number of cyclists. Therefore I think we should look for more tracks, but they really need to be safe (and we need to remember they are not necessarily the solution for experienced confident cyclists in a hurry, so safety should come over speed.

For some time the two-way track along Byng Place/Gordon Sq/Tavistock Sq (part of route 0) has really concerned me. I suspect this does attract inexperienced cyclists, yet I find this to be about the most hazardous feature of my commute requiring all my care and attention. Cycling along the route involves being aware of vehicles taking your right of way from any of 3 directions. And moving north-south (e.g. north out of Woburn Sq) has become like a game of frogger involving

crossing 4 lanes of traffic moving in alternative directions without a refuge. Added to this the track inevitably angers motorists. You could argue that is their problem, but it is ours if they take out their pent up emotion on a passing cyclist. I am not sure whether CCC lobbied for separate 1-way tracks on each side of the carriageway, and this is all there was space for. I know getting the track at all reflects lots of work, but I think we need to reflect and take stock with an open mind. I realise that CCC committee members past and present have put in a lot of effort to make Camden truly a pleasant place to cycle around, and that people are naturally wedded to things they have fought hard to achieve, but I do think we need to learn from this before asking for more of the same. What do others think???

I apologise if this topic has been covered before

30th January. Michael Stuart

I feel safer on ordinary roads than on segregated cycle paths. I've commuted into Central London for 20 years and have used cycle paths very little so my unfamiliarity may be part of the reason.

I started working in Holborn recently and have the option of using the path around Tavistock Place / Tottenham Court Road. I find it difficult on the cycle path to negotiate junctions as I don't know if cars will be expecting / looking out for me and I'm not so sure where they're coming from. I also feel I have to concentrate to stay on a narrow path and avoid collisions with other cyclists. I feel more relaxed and prefer, and often do, use the normal road, but feel I shouldn't when there's a cycle path that's already taken up road space. Having said all this, the cycle path is certainly well used by cyclists so I might be in a minority.

I agree with Richard's sentiments about respecting the amount of work that went into achieving what we have but keeping an open mind.

30th January. Tony Raven

I'm with you and avoid using it even though there is now less room for motorists to pass me on the road as a result of its construction and some motorists now object to me being on the road at all.

The problems I find are first of all the ones you mention: traffic turning across the lane at junctions and not seeing cyclists coming from a direction they are not expecting; exiting the cycle lane westbound to

take a left turn means negotiating across two lanes of traffic and there is no room to wait for a gap without blocking the lane for other cyclists; there is no room to pass slower cyclists unless there are no cyclists coming the other way and at the Tottenham Court Road end I find myself wanting to go to the far side of TCR. From the cycle track that puts me in conflict with all the traffic turning right from my left whereas if I am on the road I am completely clear to cross without conflict. I find these shortcomings just too dangerous to make it worth the risk although as you say a lot of cyclists do use it.

31st January. Jean Dollimore

We've had quite a few messages about the problems on route 0 (or SSL or east-west route).

They are useful in identifying the problems that can/do occur with segregated cycle tracks, mainly related to junctions. That route is still under construction and has been bedevilled by delays in installing signals, to the extent that sections have been closed recently for safety reasons.

But we have another segregated cycle track in Camden (route 6 or north-south route) on Royal College Street. We do already have data from a study carried out by TRL soon after the track opened, but now that it has been there (complete) for seven years, all users (cyclists, pedestrians, bus users and vehicle drivers) are used to it and most probably make allowances for interactions. I would therefore be interested to hear about experiences there, to see whether we can identify the characteristics of a different location.

I hope that most of you will come along to the discussion on Monday 12th Feb, but anything that is said here will be taken as input as well.

31st January. Meade McCloughan

A question for Tony and others who don't like and say they don't use the segregated tracks: does this mean that you also don't use them when they provide for contraflow cycling along otherwise one-way streets?

I'm thinking for example of the western stretch of Torrington Place, headed east, and Royal College Street, going south.

31st January. Tim Timms

As an "other" who does use segregated track and like them, particularly in Holland, though each has its plusses and minuses, you hit a nerve there with me as I find southbound Royal College St particularly dangerous.

I have had a bad collision with a cyclist coming out of Pratt Street failing to look left at all, just looking right and being stationary and then taking off into me (to go straight across) without any warning. Cars, one always has to assume the worst for, to be safe, so you practically have to give way to them, and I have had to train the kids to be extra cautious in this regard along here. I would have loved a place for the kids to cycle as we live here, but this is not safe for kids.

Its just not as simple as its laid out to be. There probably isn't an easy answer, no I wouldn't cycle on the road southbound against the traffic flow, despite it possibly being safer as it would be more obvious and I wouldnt make assumptions, that drivers expected any particular behavior or would give way. However I regularly avoid the cycle path northbound and cycle on the road, its safer and I find the bumps at the bus stops impossible without slowing right down. If this is our example of segregated tracks its a non starter.

Sorry to say all this as I do appreciate segregation. I would particularly like to see it at dangerous places where it usually disappears, or on country lanes that no one cycles because its too dangerous, cars dont expect anyone, even pedestrians, to be on their road.

I would like to see whole new routes for cycles, or put the tracks up Camden High Street for example.

31st January. Michael Stuart

I would certainly use it when a contraflow on a one-way street (and enjoy the feeling of privilege).

I do sometimes use it on 2 way streets, just don't feel as safe

31st January. Tony Raven

I've only used the Royal College Street once going north. It was a quiet early morning with very light traffic and I stayed on the road - couldn't be bothered AFAIR with all the up and downing over the bumps in

the cycle lane. But really I don't have enough experience there to comment usefully.

On Torrington Place eastbound, there is no street opposite it feeding onto TP so I would usually use Chenies St or University St depending on whether I had approached from Maple St or Google St/TCR. It would be much easier and give more room for everyone though if you wanted a contraflow cycle lane to do as in Downing St in Cambridge and just paint one on, expecting cycles with the traffic flow to be on the normal part

of the road. <http://www.camcycle.org.uk/map/location/2317/>

31st January. George Coulouris

More questions for Tony. In Cambridge, where I know he cycles and campaigns, there are several excellent 'cyclist only' facilities that aren't strictly 'segregated tracks' in the usual but were presumably

constructed in response a perceived need from cyclists for dedicated tracks. I'm thinking of the cycle/pedestrian bridge over the rail tracks and the one recently built over the A14 near Milton.

Then there is the fact that cyclists in Cambridge benefit hugely from the virtual closure of much of the city centre to through traffic for most of the time.

Tony:

(a) Did you not support the construction of the Milton cycle bridge? After all there was a perfectly good route available for cyclists using the Milton Road if they were willing to mix it with motorists joining/leaving the A14.

(b) Do you not worry that by eschewing segregated facilities we weaken the pressure for the transfer of road space from motorists to cyclists and pedestrians, as has so successfully been achieved in Cambridge? Only segregated tracks or closure of roads to motor traffic can achieve that transfer in any real sense.

31st January. Richard Thomas

I didn't want to start a bun fight. I think segregation has its place, and I support reclaiming road space from motorists, but I don't like using novice cyclists (attracted to the segregated track) as human ammunition with which to win that space.

I think RCS works better than SSL because the side roads have less traffic (that's my perception),

and the traffic is altogether lighter so drivers are less assertive.

For the record, I do tend to use the track if I ride RCS northbound (though if coming up TCR I use Albert St and then Gloucester Ave which is altogether more pleasant).

If I'm headed south and round that way, I tend to use St Pancras Way or Camden St (but then I don't think the track is aimed at me).

I can't recall have had cause to use Torrington Place contraflow, though I can see it being a useful route. I suppose I would have preferred a "false one-way" plug with cycle gap at the junction with TCR, though because Huntley St is so little used I don't find this stretch very problematic.

Like Tim, I wish we could achieve more segregation, but we need to do so in a way that doesn't endanger the track users or cyclists who choose not to use the tracks.

31st January. Tony Raven

The Cambridge Cycling Campaign spends a lot of time trying to get these "excellent facilities" into a basic usable state.

And until very recently it (city centre) was closed to cyclists too - which the Campaign has just got lifted.

I used to "mix it" daily over that roundabout before the bridge was built (I no longer commute that way) without problems. The bridge was built but it has several problems. The most significant is it has given the traffic planners free reign on redesigning the road so that it is now a very hostile cycling environment. The response to complaints is that cyclists don't need to use the road because they have the bridge.

The bridge itself is not gritted in icy weather or swept (too costly) and arrives in Milton in the middle of an industrial estate with lots of truck and HGV movements and parking. So overall I believe cyclists have lost out. The use is as much because the road alternative has been made unusable for most all as the benefits of the bridge.

Do you not worry that by eschewing segregated facilities we weaken the pressure for the transfer of road space from motorists to cyclists and pedestrians,

I worry the opposite way. As above I have seen so many schemes where the planners have thrown in a "cycle facility" and then used it as an excuse for a road design that is cyclist unfriendly. Effectively the

facilities in many cases are leading to roads becoming no-go places for all but the most confident cyclists. A good example is Harston. The road is littered along its length with pinch points which lead to continual conflicts (and on Kings Hedges Road the City Council has just apologised to cyclists for installing a similar arrangement) When I protested about their installation the response was there was a cycle path for cyclist. The cycle path crosses about 40 drives, several commercial premises entries and one petrol station forecourt along its length at each of which you have to slow down, check 360 degrees for vehicles leaving or turning into the drive while negotiating any pedestrians. The road was a perfectly good road for cycling but an inadequate cycle path has allowed it to be made a very unsatisfactory road for cycling.

On top of that many motorists then think you shouldn't be on the road at all. Try cycling north on Milton Road for a few days on the road and see how many motorists intimidate and harass you and shout at you to "get on the cycle path".

So no, I think cycle paths worsen the provision for cyclists overall and encourage motorists to think the roads are theirs and not for sharing. The only facilities I agree with are ones that provide additional routes to the roads such as the cut through the old County Hall from Westminster Bridge to Waterloo.

1st February. David Arditti

There is a lot in what Tony says here.

However, it is well known that different intelligent people can observe the same facts and draw totally opposite conclusions from them.

I come back to what I argued with Paul Gannon in our article for LC in 2002 "European Lessons to Increase Cycling" (I still have spare copies if anyone wants them). There is no need in the UK for us to re-invent the wheel so far as cycling is concerned. There is a wider world beyond the English-speaking one, in which huge progress has been made in integrating mass cycling with advanced technological societies, and we really need to start understanding that and copying it here. We wrote this 5 years ago, but there has been virtually no progress making this happen so far, which is frustrating.

British cycle facilities are absolutely in the Stone Age. They are totally unfit for the purpose they set out to achieve, in 99.99% of cases. But it doesn't have to be so. It can be done. As David Henbrow puts it in his clearly-argued article <http://www.camcycle.org.uk/newsletters/66/article9.html>

(which pretty much mirrors what Gannon and I wrote): "The Dutch network goes everywhere, feels comfortable, is popular and safe. It is successful: 27% of journeys in the Netherlands are made by bikes, more than 12 times the rate here, five to ten times lower fatality rate, no helmets or hi-vis. It has to be experienced to be understood. They still have a widespread cycling culture." It is not only the cycling culture of TN which can be usefully studied. Those of Belgium, France, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Denmark, Sweden and Finland, are all different, but useful to look at. Unfortunately the cycling world in the UK, particularly the major organisations like CTC and CCN, are stuck in an Anglophone, transatlantic model of thinking in which the European models simply do not exist. (Canada is an intermediate case as having both cultures represented). As Paul Gannon has demonstrated, so much misunderstanding and incomprehension has arisen simply because European research is not fully or correctly translated into English, and the Anglophone world therefore doesn't read it or misunderstands or misrepresents it.

Tony re-states some of the central ideas of the Anglophone cycling consensus in his reply here.

- That "cycle facilities lead to roads being no-go areas for all but the most confident cyclists" - though in fact, in the societies mentioned above, the opposite tends to happen. It is the British roads which are the no-go areas, not the Dutch ones.

- That facilities "encourage motorists to think the roads are theirs and not for sharing" which also does not happen in the European model.

- That (Tony does not say this but it is usually part of the argument) cycle facilities, in taking cyclists off the roads, prevent a critical mass of cyclists being achieved on the roads. Again, the reverse happens in places with well-engineered cycle networks. The cycling on the dedicated networks generates more cycling on the roads. It is not a zero-sum game where the same number of cyclists are being pushed from one place to another. There is room for all kinds of cyclists on all kinds of facilities (including the roads), but in the UK we only allow for one kind: the assertive cyclist who can cope with hostile roads. This has to change, and I think it will.

As for the Cambridge CC spending a lot of its time trying to get the facilities to a basic usable state, that's just like CCC, and it is the main function of such organisations at the moment. But if the culture changed and cycle facility engineering achieved a basic level of proficiency in the UK, the functions of such organisations would change too.

I used to use the crossing of the A14 near Milton regularly, long before the new facility was built, which I haven't tried. It was terrible as it was then, and a major barrier to cycling north from Cambridge. The new bridge is clearly an imperfect attempt to remedy this, but it is at least an attempt. I would love for the same to happen with our equivalent road to the A14 in North London, the North Circular.

1st February. Meade McCloughan

A question this time for David: you say <This has to change, and I think it will.> Why do you think it will? Doesn't the fact that we keep having to have this argument suggest that it won't?

1st February. David Arditti

Well, mainly because we are going to have to do everything we can to limit global warming, which makes the project to get as many people as can possibly cycle get on bikes far more serious. The vital thing the "assertive cycling" brigade overlooks is that many, probably most, people who could cycle don't want to be assertive. I don't particularly. I don't think training will fully overcome this on its own. We can't afford to turn those people away from cycling, which is what the policy of the Anglophone cycling consensus does. Therefore they will have to be accommodated with suitable facilities.

1st February. Tony Raven

Have you ever tried to cycle on a Dutch road with a cycle facility alongside? It is a no-go area, much more so than the UK, and motorists make it very clear that they don't want you there. A number of roads ban cyclists to the cycle facility.

Cambridge has 25% of journeys made by bicycle - on a par with the Netherlands. It's almost certainly nothing to do with the Cambridge facilities. But they do treat cycling like the Dutch - as a

way of getting around in normal clothes without helmets. And motorists on the road are used to them being there and make allowances - except in places like Milton Road where they make it very clear they expect the cyclists to get on the cycle path which crosses many drives, entrances and side roads.

Why is cycling greater in the Netherlands than the UK? As Wardlaw pointed out it is because it started out much higher than the UK post war (out of necessity) but otherwise has followed the same decline as in the UK

It is reasonably well established that if cycling doubles the number of accidents goes up by only 30%. In the Netherlands the numbers are 12 times higher so you would expect on the basis of numbers, cycling would be 4.4 times safer than the UK. In fact the rate in the Netherlands is only 2.6 times safer. So the difference in cycling safety in the Netherlands can be more than explained by the numbers cycling without having to invoke facilities to explain it at all.

[1] Passenger Transport in the Netherlands Key Figures 2004 & Road Safety in the Netherlands Key Figures 2006, <http://www.rws-avv.nl>

[2] Transport Statistics Great Britain 2006 & Road Casualties Great Britain 2005

[3] Safety in Numbers: More Walkers and Bicyclists, Safer Walking and Bicycling; P L Jacobsen; Injury Prevention; 2003;9:205-209

1st February. Tony Raven

The post 7/7 experience says otherwise. After the Tube bombs lots of people took easily to cycling who had not cycled in London before. As far as I can tell, those numbers have held up. All it needed was enough incentive to do so. What I think discourages people from cycling is the high risk image we portray with special safety equipment and the need for facilities to protect them from the dangers. The Dutch don't have those problems. The Dutch IME are somewhat bemused by the idea that one needs to wear a helmet cycling. We are doing the equivalent of telling airline passengers its essential they take a parachute with them on the flight. Is it any wonder they are put off?

1st February. Meade McCloughan

So the reason why it will change is that it has to change. Hmm.

My question was prompted by the thought that David's conclusion might be more reasonably phrased as <This ought to change - but will it?>

I still don't see any real likelihood of the fact of global warming bringing about the kind of major shift David is arguing for in the near future. Much more likely is a much later - too late - attempt to reduce emissions by drastically restricting motor vehicle use, in which case we'll have the roads to ourselves.

David's point about people who don't want to have to be assertive is good. But again the conclusion is too strong: <they will have to be accommodated with suitable facilities> - no, they ought to be - but will they? One does currently need to be assertive to get by as a cyclist on London's roads, and I don't see that changing for a long time.

And who are <we> here? Apparently not LCC, CTC, John Franklin, Tony Raven, Michael Stuart, Richard Thomas, etc...

(Apologies for being negative!)

1st February. Meade McCloughan

I don't follow your line of thought here. You are saying that <we> (that slippery term again!) put people off cycling by making out it is more risky than it really is, whereas this isn't the case in the Netherlands (your example = helmets). But surely David will say that it isn't the case in the Netherlands because of the extensive segregation, which is precisely what you don't like.

And, between ourselves, cycling in London can be, if not risky, at least unpleasant and at times scary. One deals with this by being assertive and toughing it out. Sure, there are always more people who can and are willing to develop the same attitude, maybe given incentives, like the fear of being blown up in a tube train, but I doubt growth along these lines is ever really going to take off, certainly not to the extent envisaged by David.

1st February. David Arditti

All true. I was being polemical. Your vision of the future is another

possibility, albeit a more pessimistic projection. I was putting forward a case for what cyclists and environmentalists should be arguing to decision makers now, to avert the worse scenario. The really severe split amongst cyclists on this issue confuses decision-makers, and makes them think "Maybe cycling is not a major part of the solution at all"

1st February. David Arditti

This may be starting to bore CCC readers, in which case, hit "delete".

But here are my replies to Tony's points made in two recent e-mails.

What I think discourages people from cycling is the high risk image we portray with special safety equipment and the need for facilities to protect them from the dangers.

No. I don't believe people are that daft. It's not the image that is the problem, it's the reality of the environment. This is another problem campaigners have. Do they admit that it's dangerous out there, and use that to argue for change, or do they keep saying "Come on in, the water's lovely"?

The second policy is a mistake. You have to start from the assumption that ordinary, non-cycling people out there do know something, they have a bit of nouse, and, by and large, they are taking a rational decision not to cycle, one that is correct for them. They know they could not do it with conditions as they currently are in London. There are obviously marginal cases who can be persuaded and cajoled and trained into it, but not your average granny, or your average housewife, or your average primary school pupil. Once we realise this is the scale and nature of the problem we start to make progress. These groups will not cycle without a completely transformed environment.

Obviously, nothing can ever have anything to do with cycle facilities, in Cambridge, Holland, or anywhere...

Cambridge is a special case. Cycling is "naturally" high because of the high proportion of young people circulating in a small area, without means or facilities to keep cars. The high levels of cycling in Cambridge have prompted more political pressure for cycle facilities (including cycling in the parks, which we generally do not have in London), which I believe have in some cases worked to some extent to encourage cycling further. Cycling is obviously much further up the political agenda in Cambridge than in most towns.

I would be interested in a reference for this (Wardlaw on Netherlands). It sounds like complete rubbish. What does it mean? That cycling levels in 1945 compared to some later date fell by the same percentage in TN as in the UK, or that they have fallen by the same percentage every year, or every decade, or what? How does anyone know how much cycling there was in TN in 1945? I can't imagine anyone was interested in surveying it accurately. I have looked at this paper by Wardlaw:

<http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/321/7276/1582>

Here are some interesting sentences from this:

These quotes demonstrate the complex logical problem Wardlaw - and Raven following him - get into on segregation, because they have decided - a priori - that it has nothing to do with high cycling levels in TN or anywhere else.

I am not sure whether "cycle facilities" are more dangerous than "cycling on the roads" or vice versa, and I think it is probably impossible to prove as the question is too complicated. In the end I think it is wrong to pursue the issue of casualty statistics, or "danger", for cyclists as a prime basis on which to decide cycling policy. This is because cycling is part of society, it doesn't exist in a vacuum. More people cycling means less in cars (maybe), which have a high casualty rate of their own. And more cycling makes people fitter and more long-lived, definitely. There are too many inter-related variables to be trying to calculate "lives saved or lost" as a result of cycling policy decisions. But if we decide we want more cycling as an objective, which I think we all do here, we have to try to dispassionately determine what measures will promote that objective. Wardlaw makes no attempt to do this, he merely peddles dubious assertions continually, such as those quoted above.

2nd February. Tony Raven

If it bores people then tell me to go away and I will. But my view is it's one of the most important issues to resolve in increasing cycling. The pro-facilities lobby have held sway for some long time now with their "look at the Dutch" argument but if you look for the results in UK and London utility cycling they are just not there. No doubt there will be the usual snake oil excuses like it wasn't done right or it's too early to see results, just keep taking the medicine. But perhaps it's time they

stepped aside and give the other side, supported by people like Wardlaw, Franklin, Forrester and others a chance.

]2nd February. Tony Raven

Sorry that's rubbish. Its not dangerous out there, as anyone who has spent more than a couple of minute perusing Road Casualties Great Britain would know and those that pretend it is are part of the problem

not the solution. Cycling is no more dangerous than walking. In fact if we take the choice of making a journey by foot or cycle, cycling is 30% safer.

No they don't. They have a fear of cycling like they have a fear of flying which is totally unrelated to the actual risk and those who pretend cycling is dangerous are just playing to those fears.

Over the past 20 years a myriad of cycle facilities have been introduced "to encourage cycling".

And what has happened to utility cycling in London. Virtually nothing. Meanwhile congestion charging and 7/7 have had significant impacts on the level of cycling. So how much longer do we have to go on applying the snake oil before people realise that if it hasn't worked in twenty years its probably not going to work in the next twenty either?

Wardlaw M. Assessing the actual risks faced by cyclists. Traffic Engineering Control 2002; 43:420-424.

"The high levels of cycling in these two countries [Denmark, Netherlands] are relics from a past as 'cycling countries', not the result of infrastructure. These countries experienced the same post-war cycling declines as other countries, but from far higher pre-war levels. The cities of Oxford and Cambridge in England have likewise seen traditions of high cycle use survive."

As he also points out the accident rate for pedestrians in these countries is also much better than the UK and yet all three countries have very similar segregated pedestrian facilities. So there are clearly fundamental underlying differences in traffic interactions that are not related to facilities.

Whichever way you think its difficult to deny that their widespread installation has had little impact on cycling over two decades where other factors have*. Perhaps its time to revert to the order of priority in Cycle Friendly Infrastructure where facilities are the last resort after all other measures, not the first.

*IIRC TfL said that cycling has doubled and the absolute number of accidents has halved since the congestion zone was introduced and that zone is about to be extended by quite a lot.

2nd February. Lionel Shapiro

Don't stop! This is highly valuable debate for me, who doesn't bother to do my own research. (BTW I like the segregated tracks because they afford a bit of relaxation between the hazard points of side-roads. When there are too many hazard points, like a myriad of driveways and petrol station forecourts, then I agree the road feels and probably is safer, if one can shrug off the abusive motorists, who generally are not actually homicidal.)

2nd February. Tim Timms

Please do carry on We cannot continue with policy as it is.

I cant help thinking, as has been mentioned that developments in technology and transport, fuels and efficiency, forced by politics or environment, maybe of kinds we cannot even dream of, will overtake all these kinds of problems we discuss, before we can resolve them.

However we can all be sure that there will still be bicycles, and cycling will always be relevant.

Debate, with contributions from experienced people, such as yourselves, is valuable and interesting.

2nd February. Martin Parkinson

Please forgive me for adding something to this topic.

I need forgiveness because:

(a) I no longer live in Camden - or London for that matter

(b) I only dipped the briefest of toes into cycle campaigning while I was here and I do, very humbly, realise that there are people on this list who have done large amounts of honourable and persistent work in that line. As I say, I am not by temperament an activist, more of a sitonmybumandthinkivist.

Or perhaps I don't need forgiveness for posting because:

(a) The issues being disputed here are not specific to london - and in a sense they might not even be specific to cycling

(b) This type of dispute has rather put me off involvement with cycle campaigning per se. I've started to think that if I really want to do something to push active transport, it might be better to help the campaign against road expansion.

Cycle wars

This particular exchange has been mostly quite calm - but I'm sure you all know what I'm talking about. I find the terms in which this debate is often conducted to be deeply unpleasant so I wonder what is really causing people who are basically on the same side to talk as if they deeply, personally, hate each other. (Oh and I should not need to add that, in cyberspace, you never know who is listening).

One reason why internecine disputes can be so vicious is that it can often happen that the real problem (one's true 'enemy') is too big, too diffuse, or too obscure, to be easily get-at-able. However, people on ones own 'side' who have different opinions are not the least diffuse or obscure and you can get at them easily. Negative emotion which has been legitimately provoked by the external problem can get attached to one's colleagues who are offering a slightly different solution. The 'external problem' here is too much motor traffic and a mad system which smiles fondly on its growth.

You might say that I am being naive and that the segregated v. on-the-road argument really is fundamental and I should pick a side so I can join in the fun. But when I read the actual arguments being used, I find myself being persuaded by both sides:

Many cycle facilities don't seem helpful, dangerous even (certainly true in my experience) - but it's not facilities per se and if they were better then they would encourage more cycling (well that's plain common sense innit?) - but how can they be better when the road engineers are stupid (yeah they're car-centred neanderthals) - well that's the purpose of groups like CCC (warm glow for heroic bike buffs) - but you can only work with what's there and in many cases there simply isn't room for decent tracks (sadly there's no denying that) - but even if we only get a few good facilities that'll move some people over to cycling and that will help (hey yeah - we gotta think positive) - and on and on ... Sometimes this dispute looks very like "the best being the enemy of the good" - familiar from many other environmental issues.

Can things ever get better?

Supposing something magical were to happen that halved the number of motor vehicles on the road - do you think we'd have this argument then? But that's not going to happen is it? Probably not. However, I have two 'buts'. The first is that campaigning against road expansion might prevent things from getting worse: more roads = more cars. The second is that 'prediction is difficult - especially of the future'. Although we've got enough oil left to hang ourselves with, we are approaching the halfway stage, so-called 'peak oil', after which the annual production gradually starts to diminish. We don't know what the effect will be when this happens - it has been suggested that simply knowing that we're now 'half-empty' could have enormous effects both psychologically and politically. Could be lots of nasty trouble, could be a few golden opportunities, maybe nothing much. We just don't know. And (if you're wondering) these speculations are quite serious: 'peak oil' is discussed in the current Open University course which I'm doing.

Useful Point of Terminology

I was recently chatting to someone who'd worked as a cycling officer (Northampton I think?). He made the helpful terminological distinction between "cyclists" and "people who ride bicycles". The point being that PWRBs do not think of themselves as "cyclists" so communications addressed to "cyclists" will not register with them. I think this has some relevance to the tracks-road discussion.

Seldom mentioned point of information about Cambridge

The students don't ride bikes just because they are students; it is also that they are actually forbidden from keeping a car by the University (although I'll admit my information is a quarter of a century out of date)

Enough. For the moment.

2nd February. Martin Parkinson

I think from Tony Raven's reply to my post, he assumes I'm veering towards the pro-segregation position.

I am pleased he thinks this - because a very long while ago I wrote something about how I'd been very interested by John Adams work and the ideas of "psychological traffic calming" and Paul Gannon zinged back at me assuming I was at worst a pro-roads CTC nut or at best a foolish

dupe of same.

I have therefore been mistaken for belonging to both sides. Not surprising, as I find both sides convincing.

2nd February. Tony Raven

Not at all. I was just addressing specific points you raised.

3rd February. David Arditti

Just to deal with this important point (cycling no more dangerous than walking):

This is the mistake of taking casualty figures as a measure of danger (that Mayer Hillman is always criticising).

It's like the situation of the road crossing for pedestrians that is so dangerous, no-one ever goes there, so there are no casualties. It is apparently safe, because it is so dangerous. This is exactly the situation with cycling for the social groups who are almost unrepresented amongst cyclists.

They make a correct judgement of the high level of danger that cycling on the roads presents to them, therefore they don't do it, therefore they don't add to the casualty figures.

It's fairly safe for most of the people who do it, because people can judge their own capabilities. But this situation limits cycling, like skydiving or mountaineering, to a small subset of the population. This is serious because cycling is so socially and economically useful, unlike those other activities.

3rd February. Paul Gannon

A few background comments on the Royal College St and Bloomsbury tracks may be helpful.

The original proposal for RCS suggested closing both Pratt St and Plender St junctions to all except local access traffic; motor traffic

would have been diverted via Crowndale Rd and up on to RCS, creating a largely motor traffic free area and removing some rat runs. The Plender St route is a major part of the Camden Town gyratory.

Similarly in Bloomsbury the junctions at either side of Gordon Square and south of Tavistock Sq. would have been closed to motor traffic (which would have been diverted via Woburn PI and Endsleigh Gdns). The Gordon Square junction is part of the major taxi and commercial traffic rat run to Euston Station and Euston Road.

These original proposals would have left the major segments of both tracks with only signalized junctions at main London motor traffic roads (effectively motorways overlaid on inner London streets).

Also, according to our proposals, the Bloomsbury track would have been significantly wider and would not have switched back and forth across the road. This would have required the introduction of some one-way working of motor-traffic (on parts of Torrington PI & Tavistock PI).

These proposals were not implemented by the council for a variety of reasons, but essentially because the political will did not exist with sufficient support for the project at the critical stage.

Support for the original go-ahead came from councillors in the Streets Committee. But, Camdens change from committee system to executive system, coincidentally or not, also marked the point at which that support became insufficient i.e. at the point at which implementation details had to be tackled.

It does seem to me that a lot of the criticisms of the RCS and Bloomsbury tracks on this list would be addressed by better implementation and specifically the points above about the junctions.

Tony Rs view seems to be that the problems of technical implementation of tracks are too great to be overcome and all implementations must be more dangerous and counter-productive and that by proposing changes at the junctions, I am really recommending one more dose of snake oil.

However, my three-year experience of using Dutch cycling infrastructure makes me quite certain that a high-quality implementation is possible if the political will exists, or can be developed, to build it, so I see no overriding reason to reject continental experience to fit an a priori assumption that cycle tracks are inherently bad. Quality of design and implementation are essential and in Britain that is what is absent.

So, another controlling factor could be that British local authorities and the road engineering profession simply lack the experience and desire to implement such projects effectively. One example is the total mess that is the TfL unit that handles traffic signals. Its bureaucratic structure makes it a bottleneck on developments, with the adoption of second-best design options in order to avoid needing work by the signals unit. Obviously this makes cycle tracks and other facilities

requiring signals work to be effectively ruled out (similarly London has no traffic lights controlled by buses, a technology that is 25 plus years old, but way beyond the capabilities of one of the worlds richest cities, or beyond its governmental structure anyway).

However, I think that the weaknesses identified in the implementation of these tracks are not evidence of poor British engineering capabilities or the inherent failings of cycle tracks, but are in fact evidence of our political weakness, our inability to create sufficient political support for effective measures.

One thing that comes up frequently in this discussion is some determining reference to The War. I don't get this at all, unless it is viewed as another expression of Britain's debilitating historico-mythical attitudes to WWII and to other Europeans. For a start the differences in wartime experience and post-war condition of countries as diverse as the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Switzerland and parts of Germany, must surely of itself make nonsense of the idea.

What mattered were the differences in post-war policy decisions, made by central and local government, to support or to discourage cycling. Decisions made in the late 1970s and 1980s, and reinforced in the 1990s and 2000s, led to the construction of high-quality cycle networks which led to the maintenance of mass use of cycling as a mode of transport (and all this is documented, so there should be no need to prolong The War style theories).

Given that cycle tracks mean an enormously more pleasant cycling experience and sustain a mass cycling culture, I've never really been able to understand why so many British cycle activists get so worked up about the subject.

It also seems to me that one thing is quite clear from the statistics. The countries with lots of good quality cycle tracks have balanced gender profiles among cyclists, and many more older cyclists, than in London and the UK generally. It seems to me that our policy should, AS ITS PRIMARY AIM, seek to address the factors which retard take up of cycling specifically among women and older people, rather than simply stimulating further growth among the present user-profile, which is grotesquely distorted towards the younger male. So I've also often wondered why British cycle activists turn a blind eye to the highly distorted gender-bias of the context of cycling in Britain.

3rd February. Tony Raven

The "ah but you didn't do it right" answer I predicted. Here, out of interest, is a totally unsolicited comment about the result from advice on another list for someone wanting to get from KX to Paddington :

"I attempted to avoid Euston Rd doing KX to Paddington last Friday and I reckon it was a mistake. It turned out the road I was on had a two-way cycle lane down the rhs (separated by a kerb). Bloody stupid idea it was, it was quite narrow for two-way traffic, had kinks in it which were difficult to negotiate at a reasonable speed, and was very problematic where traffic lights occurred. A left turning taxi (coming the other way) turned across my path at one point. Mad. On the return journey (late on Saturday) I just blasted down Euston Rd, and that was much better."

No, my view is that there is a perfectly good facility that goes virtually everywhere I want called the roads which are slowly being marginalised for cyclists by facilities. Tavistock Place is one such example where an inadequate facility has robbed road space making road co-existence of cyclists and motorists much more difficult and much less tolerated by the motorists. I want transport planners to concentrate on road design that provides for cyclists, not road design that can ignore cyclists by banishing them to their facility ghettos.

Which coincidentally is exactly what LTN 1/04 - Policy, Planning and Design for Walking and Cycling, wants where cycle tracks and segregated facilities are at the bottom of the provision hierarchy for when all other options have been exhausted.

Here's an amusing German and Dutch view of their cycle tracks:

http://www.swb.de/personal/elch/e_50-reasons.html

<http://www.m-gineering.nl/touringg.htm>

But 39% of staff cycle to work even though they are allowed to use a car. And 25% of overall journeys to work in the City are by bicycle.

2nd February. Martin Parkinson

I should perhaps have added to my last post, that it was not an invitation to try and persuade me to join one of the gangs!

I do mean that with a <grin> but I don't suppose it will be accepted.

I have read a lot of the 'well-known' web stuff about this (I'm like Hermione in the 'Harry Potter' books - very big on 'book learnin', but not very experienced in practice). I am also interested enough in statistical argument to know that it has subtleties and pitfalls - but not experienced enough in statistical argument to form very confident judgements of my own based on skimpy and contradictory evidence. Another reason for shaking my head sadly and joining the RoadBlockers ...

3rd February. Tony Raven

(reply to David Arditti about danger). That sir is just nonsense and shroud waving of the worst kind. In Cambridge it is 25% with 39% of University staff cycling to work. These are not small enthusiast subsets of the population nor is there the mass carnage you predict when these large numbers get out there on bicycles.

For 2004 in the whole of Greater London there were just 8 cyclist fatalities (Camden had none). One was Vicki McCreary run over by a bus on Blackfriars Bridge using a stupidly placed cycle lane that has since been removed.

There were no child fatalities and yet I know of primary schools in London that have provided cycle training and have over-flowing bike sheds and are building more to meet demand so there certainly are children cycling on the roads of Greater London.

So what you are saying is we need training widely available for those people so they can join the "fairly safe" group rather than facilities which can only ever exist for a proportion of their journey and therefore will always leave them with an off-putting road section to face (even in the beloved Netherlands virtually all cycle journeys are only partially on facilities).

3rd February. Anne Boston

I've lost count of the number of people who have told me they wouldn't cycle because it's too dangerous. I tell them they have more danger of heart disease from sitting at home on their bottoms, but the PERCEPTION of risk is what deters them.

In fact I find I encounter lots of risks every time I take my bike out. The trick is to take avoidance action, and that (as a police officer once told us at a CCC talk) is what saves cyclists from accidents: watching out for hazards. Many other people consider they're taking avoidance action in going by bus or tube.

3rd February. Meade McCloughan

Three points in response to Tony's recent e-mails:

- I do some of the cycle training in schools Tony refers to, and can tell you that very few children cycle to school on the road, contrary to what he states - nearly all of them ride on the pavement: bad inference!

- Tony clearly speaks for those cyclists who are happy to "blast down the Euston Rd", are always itching to overtake cyclists on segregated tracks and find it unbearable having to go over the raised tables on the Royal

College Street cycle track - well, not everyone wants to or should have to cycle with this mindset.

- Sure, cycling as such isn't dangerous, but conditions in London frequently mean that it is; in response to Tony's blase claim that it is "not dangerous out there", all one has to say is - Swiss Cottage gyratory. One could go on and on and on ...!

3rd February. Martin Parkinson

Terminology question - does "utility cycling" include commuting or is it just shopping etc? Or is UC defined by journey length rather than function? (that's to say would you distinguish a 'utility commuter' whose journey takes a gentle fifteen mins from a 'transportation commuter' who belts away for forty mins)? I assume there's an official definition used by transport analysts?

It sounds like nitpicking (and I know I've just grumbled that none of it matters much unless motor traffic reduces), but the question of types of cycling (and People-who-ride-bicycles versus 'Cyclists' as well) is surely central to what is being discussed. Shopping (for example) by bike (for me anyway) involves a quite different mindset from getting to a destination where I will spend the whole day. I'll tolerate and avoid different things in the two activities. Hmmm. In fact shopping by bike (in London) just felt like far too much trouble - even when I was commuting regularly, twenty years ago.

3rd February. Tony Raven

(reply to Meade about cycletraining) Bad assumption. You have no idea which schools I was referring to. But if what you say is correct then you are wasting a lot of your time with them on National Standard Cycle Training Levels 2 & 3 which is all about riding on the road. And you are clearly failing in achieving the outcome of Level 2 training which is that pupils will "be able to demonstrate the skills and understanding to be able to make a trip safely to school, work or leisure on quiet roads"

I don't speak for anyone but myself but the quote was an experienced and confident cyclist finding the Tavistock Place segregated facility to be unpleasant and dangerous compared to Euston Rd. If you think Swiss Cottage needs fixing, go and fix Swiss Cottage rather than using it to justify building facilities everywhere else.

I hope you are not transferring your fear of cycling on the road to the children you teach but I suspect you are. In which case is it any wonder your trainees cycle to school on the pavement.

2nd February. Tony Raven

"Common sense is the collection of prejudices acquired by age eighteen." - Albert Einstein
Its also surely equally common sense to address people's fear of flying by giving them all parachutes at the boarding gate.

Have you discussed the US Department of the Interior forecasts in 1939 and 1951 that there were just 13 years of oil left? Have you discussed methane hydrate?

3rd February. Tony Raven

(reply to Martin about utility cycling)

I use it for cycling as transport rather than recreation or sport. I don't know whether there is an official definition.

3rd February. David Arditti

(reply to Tony Raven about high levels of cycling elsewhere)

So are there actually figures supporting this in the source, or is it just an assertion?

Wardlaw makes many incorrect assertions in his writings. Consider the multiple errors in this short sentence I quoted before:

Error 1: Being hit from behind is not rare. I frequently see the claim, often in relation to the teaching of on-road cycling technique, that it is, but the analyses I have seen of crash types involving cyclists show consistently that about 10% of the cycle crashes in London are of this type.

Error 2: There are other types of incidents that segregation protects from. The main one is "dooring", since in a well-designed facility, cyclists cannot come into the path of opening car doors. This is one of the largest categories of cycle crash. Other things a segregated cyclist are protected from are cutting-in manoeuvres, often performed by stopping taxis and buses.

Unjustified assumption: the reduction of convenience. I will not go into the "increasing other risks", as I think it is very complicated, but I don't accept that the evidence shows junction risks are actually increased by segregated facilities. The vast majority of crashes on non-segregated roads are at junctions: junctions are always dangerous. But why the reduction of convenience? That must be Wardlaw's experience. But good designs, maintaining or increasing the junction priority for cyclists, increase convenience, by this means, as well as the by creation of new links. When I cycled that way frequently, I found the Royal College street track highly convenient, and would go out of my way to use it. And Tony seems to agree about this part to some extent, as he says he does support cycle facilities which create useful new links.

Also, Tony agrees that an effective way to increase cycling is to make motoring more difficult - hence his references to the Congestion Charge and the Ring of Steel. But this is one of the things that dedicated cycle facilities - involving the redistribution of the existing roadspace away from motor vehicles, for the exclusive use of cycles - do, and aim to do, when carried through concertedly with the proper political support that Paul Gannon emphasises. Redistribution must make it harder to get around city centres by car - it has simultaneously a carrot and a stick effect. This is key to the city-centre transformations that have been effected in the last few decades in many continental countries, and not just the Nordic ones; has Tony seem many Italian city centres recently? The British myth of the car-centred Italian is far out of date.

In the end, I can't believe that the massive investment in cycling infrastructure one sees around Europe, and that continues to be made, is all a huge, expensive mistake that actually makes cycling more dangerous. That's just a bizarre conspiracy-theory, comparable to "Men never went to the Moon". How can so many people be so consistently misled - and that only according to a

very small coterie of Anglophone cycling activists and "experts"? There seem to be no campaigns amongst cyclists in Europe for the abolition of segregated cycle facilities. On the contrary, all the pressure is for more. Maybe Tony can find some counter-examples though. I am sure he will be able to find an amusing aphoristic quotation in any case.

3rd February. Meade McCloughan

(reply to Tony). In your earlier e-mail you appeared clearly to be inferring from full bikesheds to children riding to school on the road. That is a bad inference. You now imply that you have personal knowledge of schools where full bikesheds do relate to (though obviously do not constitute proof of)

children riding to school on the road. Fine. Please tell me what schools these are.

The rest of your response on this issue is built upon the assumption that the only children I'm talking about are one's I've trained and so if they're riding on the pavement it's my fault. No. I was talking about the children I see cycling to the schools I work in. Very few of them are on the road. As to the ones I've been involved in training, virtually none of them are riding on the road to school at the outset of the training. Some have their bikes delivered to school in the back of cars. As a result of training, they are much better able to ride on the road, but whether they then do so is not in my hands. It will almost certainly be up to the their parents, who are generally very unlikely to allow their children to ride unaccompanied to school on the road. To be honest, I don't really know what happens after the training sessions - there isn't any follow-up, which is ashame. But nor do you (though you do seem to claim supernatural powers of perception - and judgment! - in this respect).

I note that you now seem to admit that some rather key parts of the London road network are dangerous for cyclists (Swiss Cottage was of course just an example).

3rd February. Tony Raven

(reply to David Arditti)

Ask Malcolm Wardlaw. I'm sure he will give you his source; he's usually meticulous on his data. Would you please stop putting quotes into my mouth. I have not said that and you are claiming your assumptions about what I think as fact.

Perhaps you should read the origins of this infrastructure.

http://www.eirbyte.com/gcc/info/bhorn_abstract.html

And how often have we seen how difficult it is for people to say they got it wrong after they have spent a lot of money?

But OK, where is the evidence from all the infrastructure building in the UK that it has increased cycling through attracting in those cyclists who are too timid to ride on the road or reduced accident rates? If infrastructure does what you claim the massive investment would have clearly visible results. And those who had made the investment would be crowing about how good an investment it had been.

So lets look at some facts. In the Netherlands since 1996 pedestrian fatalities have fallen by 33% while cyclist fatalities have only fallen by 24%; pedestrian victim hospitalisations have fallen 25% while for cyclists they have risen 10%. Since 1990 cycling has been static against an overall increase in distance travelled of 33% and a population growth of 10%. Hardly a resounding success of the massive investment. (Source: Road Safety in the Netherlands, Key Figures 2006; Passenger Transport in the Netherlands, Key Figures 2004)

Here is what the Helsinki Traffic Planning Division says about their massive investment (~€800m) in 800km of two way cycle lanes (some of which I have cycled):

"A recent study in Helsinki showed that it is safer to cycle on streets amongst cars than on our two-way cycle paths along streets. It is hard to imagine that our present two-way cycling network could be rebuilt.

But in those countries and cities which are just beginning to build their cycling facilities, two-way cycle paths should be avoided in urban street networks."

I guess in the same way that traffic planners across the country are consistently misled into believing a slap of white paint on any old pavement makes a cycle facility - or is the Warrington Cycle Campaign Facility of the Month a photoshop conspiracy?

3rd February. Tony Raven

(reply to Meade) Do you know that for a fact or is it an inference. If you know the cycling details of all the primary schools in London I would be very impressed. Please don't assume you know

everything that is going on in London.

You now imply that you have personal knowledge of schools

Except I do because my information comes direct from the trainer who is also a teacher and has observed the effects of his training for which he has won awards and for which his school has had to build extra bike sheds to accommodate demand. So which is a better assessment of the results - the teacher-trainer who sees the results daily or you who admits you don't know what happens afterwards. I believe mine is a good inference and it is yours, sir, that is the bad inference.

Anyway I'm starting to feel like I've strayed into a pool of very territorial piranhas in this thread and its time to step out of the pool and do something more productive with my time.

3rd February. David Arditti.

(In reply to Tony Raven about Helsinki)I think this refers to a paper I studied some years back. It forms a good example of the way things get distorted and misrepresented in reporting. I made an analysis of the contents of this paper in a letter to LC, as it was widely and, as usual, very partially publicised in the UK cycling press.

What I recall is that the data in the paper did not support the conclusion reached, because it was not possible to tell the overall traffic levels at the junctions being studied. It is likely the tracks were on major roads, where more interactions were to be expected, and that their crash statistics were being compared with those of quiet unsegregated roads, so the categories were not comparable. In any case the statistics showed that cycling in Helsinki, whether on tracks or roads, was far safer than cycling in the UK (though I know Tony would argue the safety is due to the numbers and that, actually, in some abstruse way, it is actually more dangerous in Helsinki than London). Most importantly, the whole tone of the study was political and anti-cycling. (This fact was nowhere mentioned in the UK cycling press apart from in my letter to LC, thus broadcasting a totally false impression). It was authored by a couple of people who believed cycling should be discouraged as it undermines the efficiency of public transport. A full reading of the paper showed it could not be regarded as an objective contribution to any discussion of the safety or effectiveness of cycle facilities.

3rd February. David Arditti.

I have looked a bit further into this now.

"Helsinki Traffic Planning Division" never said this.

This is a slightly altered quote from Cycling Campaign Network News, almost certainly authored by the editor of CCN News, out friend John Franklin.

Here is the original:

"Helsinki has 800 km of cycle paths, half of which are especially dangerous. It is hard to imagine that this system could be rebuilt, but in those countries and cities that are just beginning to build cycle networks, roadside paths and particularly two-way types should be avoided in an urban environment."

The alteration and its basis are clear. It is not a quote from the original document, which is by Dr Eero Pasanen of Helsinki City Planning Department. I have this document on my computer, and could forward it to anyone interested. It is not a research paper or study at all, contrary to the CCN report on it, it is a collection of references to other research, glossed with Pasanen's own (weird) views on cycling and cyclists. He thinks "Cycling competes rather more with public transport and walking than with the

use of private motor vehicles" and that "many cyclists feel themselves as "saviours of the world"... they may imagine that they have more rights than other road users." The title of one of its sections is (and not ironically, the author is really trying to prove this) "Cycling is dangerous"!

And this is a document that "Cycling is safe" Tony wants us to give credence to!!!!

I rest my case.

4th February. Tony Raven

I suggest you check

<http://www.bikexpert.com/research/pasanen/index.htm>

where you will find it is a direct quote from a paper written by Eero Pasanen of the Helsinki Traffic Planning Division. People can read it and make up their own mind about what he said. You will find much of the content familiar from peer reviewed papers of him and his collaborators such as [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0001-4575\(95\)00041-0](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0001-4575(95)00041-0)

4th February. David Arditti

Thanks for that link. It is the paper I have read before. Tony is correct that his quotation is the second paragraph of the abstract, which I missed. His original statement that the contents are the views of "Helsinki City Traffic Planning Division" remains wrong - they are the views of the author. There is no evidence of anything else. Anyway, readers (if there are any left) can study this and judge the quality of the research Tony relies on. Those with access to the LCC "issues" list can read the analysis (demolition might be a better word) of this paper Paul Gannon made in 2005, here:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/LCC-CPECplus/message/1517>

Meade's comments on the lack of follow-up on the cycle training in schools he has been involved, and his uncertainty - I put it no stronger than that - on its effectiveness, are interesting, coming from someone involved at the sharp end. The cycling world seems to be divided between those who think, like me, that it is necessary to improve the environment to achieve substantial gains in cycling, and those who believe its all about training. Training is the big answer touted by CTC and others highly sceptical of the value of engineering solutions. Substantial public money is now going into training. It will be necessary to establish clearly how effective this training is at generating a sustained increase in cycling in the absence of parallel measures to improve the physical environment. Those who support facilities are criticised for lack of evidence of the effectiveness of facilities, but where is the evidence for the effectiveness of training? I don't know of any hard, relevant evidence for London or similar areas.

As I have often said, I believe both quality training and quality infrastructure are essential prerequisites for greatly increasing levels of cycling. I doubt the effectiveness of either without the other.

4th February. Lionel Shapiro

Training works. Proof? If it don't, the training was unsuccessful.

So, for 'training' read 'accelerated, informed, experience'. Any fule kno that Police motorcyclists, ambulance drivers, fire engine drivers have fewer collisions per wotsit than the general oiks.

Deaths of motorcyclists are mainly of fairly new riders, and I would expect this to be true of cyclists, though not as much because there is a fair amount of killing rather than self-harming silliness, of cyclists eg the Blackfriars bridge, Camley street and maybe Euston road killings.

Defensive riding is not a very big burden, and will save my life for a while, on and off facilities.

John Franklin's book on cyclecraft is a very cost-effective way to improve one's personal risks on the road (through reading it, not using it as elbow padding).

But training takes effort and money, and my hope is that 'facilities' will protect those who can't be arsed to care for themselves, or who don't realise they need training or can get it.

Getting people trained is probably more cost-effective than 'facilities', and if the 'facilities' money were turned to marketing and doing training, it could well save more lives/limbs than facilities. But I'd still want facilities like contraflows and plugs and decent segregated tracks in cities.

BTW, I understand that the Green Cross Code is no longer advertised nor taught in schools.

Anyone know why or if it matters?

4th February. Tony Raven

(in reply to David A) His original statement that the contents are the

> views of "Helsinki City Traffic Planning Division" remains wrong -

> they are the views of the author. There is no evidence of anything else.

I leave it to others to judge which of us is correct. The article starts:

The risks of cycling

Dr. Eero Pasanen

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FINLAND"

I am glad you agree that interventions need to clearly demonstrate their effectiveness.

Substantial public money has gone into cycling infrastructure for years. In my opinion it is now time for the proponents to show clear hard evidence that it has been effective before any more money is spent. I hope this is something we can both agree on.

As for the effectiveness of training, have a peruse of

<http://www.cycletraining.co.uk/resources/CycleTrainingWorks.pdf> and TRL-214 (1996): "The effectiveness of child cycle training schemes". Anecdotally I also know that one London primary school has gone from one pupil cycling to school to ~70 doing so as the result of National Standards Cycle Training.

4th February. Tony Raven

(in reply to Lionel) Not training as such but Forester* found that CTC members and League of American Wheelmen members had accident rates one eighth and one fifth respectively of those of college adults (students and staff).

5th February. Anthony Hynes

My experience is anecdotal, not scientific, but based on nearly 20 years of commuting into the centre from Kentish Town. I avoid many of the segregated cycle tracks, especially south bound. There are too many points where you are put into conflict with traffic cutting across you and where you need to have absolutely all your wits about you, eg Tavistock Pl and the turn off St Pancras Way onto the Royal College St track (either traffic behind you on Georgiana St or straight into you at Pratt St). I have experienced more potentially dangerous conflict with road traffic on these routes than using the more natural north/south routes eg carrying straight on on St Pancras Way or south on Marchmont St. The current routes are badly designed, too compromised and probably encouraging cyclists to ignore red lights to ensure their safety. I don't think the issue of whether you are an experienced assertive cyclist is relevant, there are problems with these routes whichever type of cyclist you are.

A further example, the recent change to the traffic lights at the Kentish Town/Leighton Road junction probably intended to benefit cyclists is a mess. During rush hour going south I am now rarely able to get to the front of the traffic and there are now more cyclists than ever jumping the red lights (north and south), to get round the jams and delays at the lights.

6th February. David Arditti

With all the comments, many of them quite justified, about safety problems with Camden's current segregated cycle tracks, lets not forget the results of the survey, conducted by CCC three years ago, of cyclists using the track at Byng Place. It can be found under links section of CCC website. It shows huge, resounding approval for this track, and segregated tracks in general, from the cyclists using it.

One question it, unfortunately, did not ask was "are you a member of LCC or another cycle organisation?".

I suspect most of the cyclists surveyed would not have been. This is important, because it bears on the question asked before about "cyclists" versus "people who ride bicycles". Arguably, the membership of cycling organisations, including CCC, is always going to be biased towards people who are more on the "serious cyclist" side of the line. Whereas, when you do a survey, you get all "people on bicycles". Policy should be made for the latter, much larger group, not for the "serious cyclists", whose behaviour will definitely be less affected by cycle facilities in general. Organisations like CCC need, as well as consulting their members on facilities, to make some leap of the imagination, based on research like this, as to what type of provision to support, to help the largest possible number of people on to bikes.

6th February. Tony Raven

And in other news a survey of huntsmen found overwhelming support for fox hunting.

6th February. David Arditti

I just can't fathom this attitude.

Suppose we multiplied the number of segregated cycle tracks in London by 10, 20, 50 times, which isn't going to happen. There would still be a huge number of ordinary trafficked roads for Tony and his ilk to cycle on to their hearts content.

Why do those who like the tracks have no rights, Tony? Why do women and children and old people have no rights?

6th February. Paul Gannon

Some comments on the statistical question. Im sorry its such a long report, but while its easy to fling a statistic into a discussion, in my experience whenever one looks more closely the evidence is rather less firm. Im afraid it is thus necessary to repeat some of the detail, so stop here if bored and just read the Executive Summary.

Executive Summary: There is no convincing statistical evidence to support the assertion that segregated cycle tracks are more dangerous than cycling on the roads. Papers cited recently in support of that argument have been misrepresented.

Boring (but illuminating) Details: The Finnish study needs to be looked at closely and cannot be reduced to a simplistic headline finding (indeed this applies to all the studies). It shows that one type of interaction on two-way segregated tracks has a much higher crash rate than all the other types added together. Allowing for different driving sides, there is none of these turning interactions on the RCS track, but Gordon Sq does fall into the category.

In interpreting these findings, it should be remembered that something like two-thirds to three-quarters of cycle/motor accidents on British roads occur when the cyclist is turning right, so segregated tracks cannot be condemned purely on the grounds of having one type of interaction which is statistically more common than others. What one can do is use the statistical evidence to guide planning and design of cycle tracks to minimize such interactions such as using one-way tracks or avoiding the problematic type of interaction, where of course these findings do not apply.

Tony cited Kaplan and the follow up by Moritz, or Aultman-Hall & Hall (*Accid. Anal. and Prev.* 30 (1) 29-43, 1998, not cited by Franklin) that says: "The relative rates for falls and injuries suggest it is safest to cycle on-road followed by off-road paths and trails, and finally least safe on sidewalks." .

The results from Aultman-Hall deals with leisure trails and sidewalk cycling under US conditions and definitions. Sidewalk cycling is known to us as pavement cycling as we would call it. As no one is proposing pavement cycling and leisure trails are not really part of the agenda in Camden, this paper is not relevant to the issue.

By and large, the same applies to Moritz and Kaplan in that their studies are based on US conditions and US definitions which are not easily transported to UK/European situations. I say this even though Moritz's findings are less favourable to Tony's case than one might expect given that he cited it in his support (Moritz cites Kaplan's work and another more recent survey (more details in Appendix A below, where Kaplan is LAW74, Moritz is LAB 96, WA94 is the third paper)). It develops a relative danger index. The higher the figure the greater the danger. The key for our discussion is the relative RDI between A) major [road] w/o [without] bike facilities and minor [road] [ditto] on the one hand and B) signed bike route only and on street bike lanes (treated as one category by Kaplan).

In all three studies these categories show a significantly lower RDI than the on-road categories (see Appendix A), the opposite of what you would expect from Tony's citation of the paper in support of his case. However, I'm not sure that this has any real significance for us in the UK. Only about 10% of the crashes studied by Moritz involved cycle/motor-vehicle collisions and 59% involved falls with no other vehicle involved. And, surprise, surprise, 80% of the respondents were male. This is a survey about car drivers who drive to trails with their mountain bikes and do silly testosterone-driven things, such as falling off a lot.

Tony also points to Garder et al's meta-analysis of cycle path safety at junctions ([http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0001-4575\(94\)90034-5](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0001-4575(94)90034-5)), and he cites that paper "The conclusion that can be drawn so far from combining results shows that the most likely effect of introducing a cycle path is that the risk will increase by about 40% for a passing cyclist. The probability that the effect will be the opposite, i.e. that the risk will decrease, is very small (about 2%)".

This quote is included in the abstract of the paper (the full text of that abstract is given below in Appendix B). In the abstract the sentence above is immediately followed by a qualification: These combined results are based primarily on cross-section studies, where the layouts have not been randomly allotted. It is therefore likely that the risk increase may have been overestimated. The probability that the real effect is accident reduction is therefore somewhat greater than 2%. How much greater cannot be estimated from these studies. Tony's citation of the headline result is therefore not really supported even by the abstract of the paper.

The abstract further points out: Combined results, with the Bayesian technique, are therefore presented for only one layout comparison: accident risks for cyclists at signalized intersections with and without a cycle path. The results of this aggregation may be unreliable as well, due to deficiencies in the studies.

Meta-analysis is jargon for a re-assessment of previous papers (combined results). The new angle employed in the paper is the use of Bayesian probability theory about which I would not

claim any understanding whatsoever except to note that it is inherently subjective and provides answers within probable ranges (thus the authors qualifying of their initial conclusion) and is heavily dependent on the assumptions built into the analysis which attempts to quantify the probability that an event will conform to expectations of experts (whose views are weaved together with the analysis, according to the abstract). As will be seen from the abstract, the result anyway applies only to signalized junctions.

So this well-woven study shows some potential concern among some experts about certain types of signalized junctions, but in the view of the authors the analysis is not very certain!

Enough!! The evidence about safety from specific junctions/accidents is not in the least bit conclusive in one direction or the other and there is certainly no good statistical reason to argue that segregated tracks are more dangerous than cycling on the roads.

Appendix A from Moritz

	LAB 96	WA 94	LAW 74
Major w/o bike facilities	0.66	0.75	1.00
Minor w/o bike facilities	0.94	0.98	0.92
Signed bike route only (BR)	0.51	N/A	N/A
On-street bike lanes (BL)	0.41	N/A	N/A
On-street bike fac (BR or BL)	N/A	0.54	0.53
Multiuse trail	1.39	1.03	2.71
Off-road/unpaved	4.49	8.58	N/A
Other (most often sidewalk)	16.34	N/A	N/A

Appendix B - The meta-analysis abstract as a whole reads:

This paper presents a quantitative meta-analysis of studies evaluating, by means of the Bayesian method, the safety effectiveness of different bicycle facilities at road junctions. This is preceded by a discussion of background theories and an up-to-date presentation of today's knowledge of the cyclist's safety at intersections; alternative layouts in Scandinavia, and Sweden in particular, are shown. The project consists of a literature survey as well as interviews with experts and cyclists, and an attempt to weave together these different sources in estimating the effect of a particular layout. In summary, few studies from the Scandinavian countries exist that have treated this area with an acceptable methodology. Combined results, with the Bayesian technique, are therefore presented for only one layout comparison: accident risks for cyclists at signalized intersections with and without a cycle path. The results of this aggregation may be unreliable as well, due to deficiencies in the studies. New field studies should be initiated. The experts' prior opinion was that the introduction of the cycle path would, on average, increase the risk by about 20%, while interviewed cyclists considered that a cycle path would decrease the risk by about 20%. The conclusion that can be drawn so far from combining results shows that the most likely effect of introducing a cycle path is that the risk will increase by about 40% for a passing cyclist. The probability that the effect will be the opposite, i.e. that the risk will decrease, is very small (about 2%). These combined results are based primarily on cross-section studies, where the layouts have not been randomly allotted. It is therefore likely that the risk increase may have been overestimated. The probability that the real effect is accident reduction is therefore somewhat greater than 2%. How much greater cannot be estimated from these studies.

7th February. Tony Raven

(reply to David A)

Rights? What rights would those be? I know about our rights to cycle on the public highway and the historical attempts to remove those rights with cycle tracks but I know nothing of rights to cycle tracks. And what is it about women that leads to those rights? Are you saying they are incapable of cycling on the road?

I start from the principle that the proponents of any intervention need to clearly demonstrate the benefits of their proposed intervention. It seems that we are agreed on that based on your comments on training. So far the only evidence you have produced in response to my repeated requests to show the evidence for cycle tracks a) increasing the numbers cycling and b) increasing the safety of cyclists is a faux survey that fails all the basic principles of unbiased surveying and sets out to "prove" a preconception. You have had years of these interventions so surely you now have unambiguous unbiased data to show they achieved your objectives? Don't

you? Or are you selling snake oil to these women, children and old people? Remember they are estimated to cost £700k per km

So please do explain these rights to me and please do come back with the evidence I have asked for.

7th February. David Scollan(in reply to Paul Gannon)

Surely cycle lanes are supposed to be safer not simply no "more dangerous" than roads?

8th February. Martin Parkinson

Do forgive me - I can't seem to stay away from this dispute - it really is bothering me. And, contrary to what people keep saying, I think people **are** following it. My usual disclaimer applies - I don't know nuffink, me.

As I wrote earlier, at a certain point I start to find this type of argument "distressing". We have now reached that point - and it is the point at which people start caricaturing each others opinions.

As I previously implied, I'm not only interested in the argument itself, I also want to know why it gets so vicious. I think some of the heat is generated because it is felt by each 'side' that their strategy can **only** work if **everyone** gets onboard and pushes the same line - and so the other side really **are** the enemy of progress (Tony R has explicitly said this in fact).

The Tracks strategy

So, imagine that everyone gets with the programme on segregated tracks, then perhaps this will happen: we'll protest and write letters and attend meetings to get the authorities to put tracks in nasty dangerous places (like Swiss Cott). They'll design them badly so then we'll gnaw at them to do better. Then they'll renege on their designs and implement them badly, so we'll hassle them some more. (What I've just described is basically a cartoon version of the history of the RCS track - as far as I know from reading the account on the CCC website). We end up with decent safe tracks and more people will cycle as the tracks will be usable and cycling will look like a viable option to them. More people cycling means yet more people will see them cycling and think "well if that granny type can do it ..." . Virtuous circle. Hurrah! But will only work if we all do it - and we push for more training too, equally important of course.

The Roads strategy

Or, imagine what will happen if we all get behind the "roads" strategy. Lots of training easily available. "Cyclecraft" in every bookshop and school library. Everyone who cycles does the assertivity thing. Cyclists are more visible, taking up actual space - motorists and traffic engineers are forced to realise that we **exist**, can't be swept away, have to be taken account of. Protests, letters, meetings, just as in the first scenario - no getting away from the need to hassle the authorities. Roads designed better for cyclists - a few more people take the plunge. "Looks scary" says potential cyclist "but look - there's that granny in the traffic, followed by a bunch of kids, so it must be ok and I'll give it a whirl". Virtuous circle. Hurrah. But will only work if we all do it.

Comment

Given the fact that motorised traffic is increasing, and will continue to increase unless something is done at government level - or unless some international event causes oil to become considerably less available, I find both scenarios implausible (which is not to say that I consider cycle campaigning pointless - very far from it).

At the moment, I am starting to find the "tracks" approach, **slightly** more plausible than the roads one. Which is a pity because:

(1) I think the "roads" advocates are right that it is important not to exaggerate the danger. Tony points out, even as things stand, that there are cyclists of all shapes,sizes, ages and sexes around - if you look. But yes, though the danger may be exaggerated, it does exist.

(2) I have a huge amount of emotional sympathy for the 'roads' viewpoint. It really **is** important that we shouldn't sell the pass - why should it suddenly be "normal" to get about in a lump of metal and cranky to want to move by one's own muscle? Traveling by one's own effort, in one's own person, feels incredibly important to me. I don't want to feel that it's some sort of mad eccentricity and I need to be coddled by special facilities - it's just ... just ... **crap** the way transport policy has gone ... they mustn't be allowed to sell us the idea that what we've got is 'natural' ...etc etc.

I should point out that I have this sympathy with Tony's views despite the fact that I am basically an honorary 'granny' myself.

8th February. John Chamberlain

Well said, Martin. I'd just add that the arguments over statistics are interesting but are often difficult for a non-specialist to decode. I tend to agree intellectually with the no-segregation lobby, but I find that when I talk to less confident cyclists they really like the segregated routes. You won't hear from them on this user group because they (a) don't generally subscribe and (b) are intimidated and/or bored by the level and (sometimes) tone of the discussion.

But it is interesting that where there are segregated routes very few cyclists don't use them. And when they are blocked (as for example Tavistock Place has been recently) people take the trouble to unblock them.

I do think there is a danger in becoming a bit arrogant in telling people what they should and should not like. If people want segregated routes then we should campaign for them, make sure they are safe as possible, and if necessary warn people about the remaining dangers. I have begun to like them as well, now that I cycle a little slower.

7th February. Tony Raven

(in reply to Martin P) A pretty balanced summary. What I would add and is the basis for my arguments is that the tracks approach has been followed for at least 70 years and has just not produced the results. Nor do tracks go everywhere so people have to get back on the roads to complete most journeys anyway.

OTOH I have seen tracks repeatedly lead to the inverse of your "Road Strategy" - roads being made much worse for cyclists because planners believe they've been catered for separately with a cycle track. So do we continue down a track of being increasingly segregated while being increasingly marginalised on the roads or do we try a new tack that you call Road Strategy.

The simple measure of congestion charging has done more for cycling numbers and safety than decades of cycle track investment and the political will is growing to do more, as evidenced by the CC zone extension, the naked street experiment on Exhibition Road etc

7th February. Helen D. Vecht (in reply to John Chamberlain)

Quite a few of them won't cycle at all. They certainly go nowhere near this sort of list.

We must also consider those who haven't really thought about cycling themselves at all. Where are they? Why do I feel like I'm the last woman to cycle on Stag Lane? I saw ONE woman cycling here in two hours of observation earlier this week. We do have to address the issue of massive suppressed potential demand for cycling.

I would like segregated cycle routes to be safer than the main road, like David Scollan. I appreciate that the populations using these tracks are generally less experienced, less confident, less fit and therefore more collision-prone than the road cyclists. Having a similar level of incidents seems fair enough therefore, though any crash is one too many.

Some streets seem so hostile that people won't consider cycling without a segregated track. If this is the only way we can raise the general level of cycling to a critical level, I think we'll have to go that way. Otherwise, the cyclist will become extinct on some British streets.

7th February. Martin Parkinson

(in reply to John Chamberlain) I have to add here that the fact that people use them does not necessarily mean they actively like them. One problem with this discussion is that the causes of behaviour are complicated and opaque. And I can't help feeling that if the quantitative evidence on this was clear, the distinguished social scientist we have on this list would have told us so (MH is not one to be shy about his opinions).

I myself, used the track in Tavistock place but I did not *like* it at all. But once the things are there you sort of feel like you *have* to - the drift to compulsion and being treated like a "cranky and indulged minority". That last sentence does support the Tony Raven position - I did say I was only *slightly* moving to the "segregation" position and I really still want to sit on the fence, even if I'm facing in one direction a bit more than the other.

7th February. David Arditti

Martin's summary of the debate is accurate, and, also, there is this further point that characterises the dispute as a classic political dispute: both sides believe the other has "been in charge" for the last pre. (Though in fact, none of us are in charge, obviously.) That is a big part of the wrangle.

Tony thinks:

"the tracks approach has been followed for at least 70 years and has just not produced the results. Nor do tracks go everywhere so people have to get back on the roads to complete most journeys anyway."

That's just not how it looks from where I sit. (In fact you would have to be in the unusual position of actually living off Royal College Street or Torrington Place for things to look like that out of your window.) What I see out of my window are the results of an "integration and neglect" approach for the last 100 years. I see the results of a century of British cyclists opposing segregation. I see almost no cyclists. Living in the Outer Suburbs (with Helen), I see how bad it really is. "Cycling" here means the odd youth on the pavement. Stag Lane (where we live) is full of schools. None of the children cycle. (Actually, I did meet one when I organised a ride this summer. He said he was the only student who cycled to school, so far as he could tell, in a secondary school of 2000, with most of the children living quite locally.)

The "killer statistics" for me, in this debate, concern the age distribution of cyclists in countries which have implemented more of a "segregate and consider" approach, than an "integrate and neglect" one. Here are figures for cycling as percentage of trips by all modes for age groups (over 18) in the Netherlands and Germany. Source: Pucher & Dijkstra "Making Walking and Cycling Safer: Lessons from Europe" <http://www.vtpi.org/puchertq.pdf>

Netherlands:

Age 18-24: 30%

Age 25-39: 19%

Age 40-64: 22%

Age 65-74: 25%

Age 75+: 24%

Germany:

Age 18-44: 10%

Age 45-64: 9%

Age 65-74: 11%

Age 75+: 7%

I know statistics are dry for most people and difficult to follow. But think about these. These statistics are ABSOLUTELY ASTOUNDING. People in the Netherlands over the age of 75 make ONE QUARTER of all all their journeys by bike. People over the age of 75!!!

I haven't found directly comparable statistics for the UK, however, figures from the DfT <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/statistics/datatablespublications/personal/factsheets/2005/cyclefactsheet?version=1>

show, as I think you will guess, that we have very low levels of cycling amongst people over 60. Note, that's people only over 60 that the DfT bothers to categorise as a separate group - not very old: the Dutch figures contain two and a bit separate categories above that age level. The Dutch and German figures show cycling in those societies is maintained at an almost flat level throughout life, and high levels persist into really old age. UK figures show a severe decline with age. UK figures show gross under-representation of women. European figures show near sexual equality.

Now, of course, it cannot be guaranteed that following the same policies in the UK as in these countries would lead to the same results. Nothing in socio-economic policy is guaranteed. But do we just continue muddling through with the historical "neglect" policy, and leave cycling to die out entirely in the UK? Remember, the people who are over 60, the oldest in the DfT's categories, were children during the austere 1940s and 50 when cycling was normal in Britain. What will the levels be like when the young people of today reach that age? They will be virtually zero.

OK, let's deal with what Tony says about tracks never going everywhere. Of course they will not, no-one ever suggested they might. The vast majority of roads even in the Netherlands do not have cycle tracks. But there is a usable network. When you come off the network onto the roads, things remain not too unpleasant. The Netherlands and similar countries do not breed cultures of cycling where cyclists are stuck on cycle tracks, too afraid or confused or lacking in traffic-negotiation skills to venture onto the roads. There is reasonable integration between cycling on tracks, on paths and on-carriageway. Why does this elude us here?

Having laid blame at the beginning on "British cyclists opposing segregation", I want to row back from that slightly. The historical stances of CTC and others have not helped, but in my view a larger factor has been structure of the British State, in particular the weakness of local government. The nations that have developed cycling most successfully tend to have been those less-centralised European states with powerful regional and local government structures. This is

because cycle networks are essentially local facilities, but they are strategic local facilities. UK local government has always been too weak to implement effective strategic local and regional transport initiatives. This is because it is basically powerless. It has no fixed constitutional status or privilege, raises little money of its own, and is at the whim of all-powerful central government dictats. Whole layers of it can be created and abolished at will by central government.

It is characteristic of UK central government to say that it wants certain outcomes, such as more cycling, and to say this is the responsibility of local government, but then to deliver neither the financial independence nor the powers to local government to allow this to be progressed. We all know about the cycle routes and facilities that pack up at borough boundaries. We all remember how, when the GLC, as a strategic transport authority, tried to boost public transport and cycling with the "fares fair" policy and building cycle routes (such as the first part of the Somers Town route), it was summarily abolished by the Conservative government who didn't want those things. It is no wonder that UK local government treads with such extreme caution on transport issues that it normally compromises all progressive proposals, whether on cycling, walking, or public transport, to a point of total ineffectiveness.

In the Camden case, the "Primrose Hill Parking Consultation Judgement" of the High Court was very significant, coming at more or less the same time as the Seven Stations Link (Route 0) plan was being put forward for approval. This judgement emphasised the basic lack of strategic power of local authorities over how local roads are to be used. It seemed to say the courts could overturn any action of Camden's that the felt had not the requisite approval of local residents. This was not actually, technically, what the judgement said - it was about consultation procedures - but that was the feel and effect of it. It emphasised the concept of local roads being owned by their residents rather than by the whole community, and that was bound to make further development of cycle schemes on local roads quite problematic. We thought that TfL might be a new beginning for cycle planning in London, but they were not given usable strategic powers over cycling on local roads, so have ended up being ineffective again - funding endless studies and reports which achieve little - "Too many studies and not enough implementation" as Darren Johnson recently complained to the Mayor. This lack of strategic power is in addition to the constitutional weakness we have experienced of authorities like Camden when dealing with large non-governmental interests like the CTRL and the King's Cross developers. When Paul Gannon talks of political problems with implementation of cycle schemes, it seems to me these are not to do with particular people, but with the whole system.

These things are outside our hands - I am trying to analyse why strategic cycling schemes have nearly always failed in the UK. The most notable successes, in fact, have been outside the governmental sphere, with voluntary bodies, notably Sustrans, who have an ability to manage whole projects from beginning to end, and cross administrative boundaries, both in the geographical and hierarchical sense, in order to get results. The best results from local authorities have been when one progressively-minded authority controls the whole of a rather isolated place, eg. Cambridge, Hull, Taunton, York. This points to conditions being most difficult in London. However, Camden is in quite a good position, as it embraces both residential areas, and many of the business areas to which commuting occurs.

The basic mistake of the anti-facilities case is the lumping together of all facilities, the good, the bad and the ugly. This is so silly as to defy comprehension. It seems as if Tony can't actually tell the difference. Or maybe he only pretends that for rhetorical purposes. I know Warrington CC's "Cycle Facility of the month" is not a Photoshop conspiracy - I have contributed several of the photographs. I can tell the difference between effective facilities and bad, or dangerous, or useless ones. I suspect most of us can.

Like Martin, I think that success in cycle promotion in the UK is far from guaranteed by any method (he goes so far as to call it "unlikely"). I have given a lot of reasons why it might continue, by and large, to fail. All main political parties are now talking the right language about combating climate change, and also empowering local government, but we have heard it all before, with policy continuing to go in diametrically the other direction. The "Naked Streets" thing has proved, so far, to be no more than a fashionable buzzword. Kensington High Street is much the same as it was before, and Exhibition Road is going no-where. The record of these schemes is even worse than that of cycle facilities. They suffer from the same democratic deficit problems that cycle schemes do, and get diluted to a kind of no-change compromise nothingness.

I still think that it is probably better to try to emulate a model that is known to have worked in

some societies and geographies not tremendously different from our own (the cycle network one) rather than one which has no demonstrable working models anywhere. In particular, the "cycle culture through widespread training but no facilities" model has absolutely no demonstrable successes anywhere in the developed world. There is a wide latitude of possible models for cycle promotion, but what is politically feasible in this country is severely limited. We talk about "changing the culture", but small minorities do not change the culture of the majority very much, particularly when they are unrepresentative of society as a whole.

2nd February. Tony Ravenxx

"Common sense is the collection of prejudices acquired by age eighteen." - Albert Einstein
Its also surely equally common sense to address people's fear of flying by giving them all parachutes at the boarding gate.

Have you discussed the US Department of the Interior forecasts in 1939 and 1951 that there were just 13 years of oil left? Have you discussed methane hydrate?

But 39% of staff cycle to work even though they are allowed to use a car. And 25% of overall journeys to work in the City are by bicycle.

2nd February. Martin Parkinson

I should perhaps have added to my last post, that it was not an invitation to try and persuade me to join one of the gangs!

I do mean that with a <grin> but I don't suppose it will be accepted.

I have read a lot of the 'well-known' web stuff about this (I'm like Hermione in the 'Harry Potter' books - very big on 'book learnin', but not very experienced in practice). I am also interested enough in statistical argument to know that it has subtleties and pitfalls - but not experienced enough in statistical argument to form very confident judgements of my own based on skimpy and contradictory evidence. Another reason for shaking my head sadly and joining the RoadBlockers ...

2nd February. Martin Parkinsonxx

I think from Tony Raven's reply to my post, he assumes I'm veering towards the pro-segregation position.

I am pleased he thinks this - because a very long while ago I wrote something about how I'd been very interested by John Adams work and the ideas of "psychological traffic calming" and Paul Gannon zinged back at me assuming I was at worst a pro-roads CTC nut or at best a foolish dupe of same.

I have therefore been mistaken for belonging to both sides. Not surprising, as I find both sides convincing.

2nd February. Tony Ravenxx

(to Martin) Not at all. I was just addressing specific points you raised.

3rd February. David Arditti

Just to deal with this important point (cycling no more dangerous than walking):

This is the mistake of taking casualty figures as a measure of danger (that Mayer Hillman is always criticising).

It's like the situation of the road crossing for pedestrians that is so dangerous, no-one ever goes there, so there are no casualties. It is apparently safe, because it is so dangerous. This is exactly the situation with cycling for the social groups who are almost unrepresented amongst cyclists. They make a correct judgement of the high level of danger that cycling on the roads presents to them, therefore they don't do it, therefore they don't add to the casualty figures.

It's fairly safe for most of the people who do it, because people can judge their own capabilities. But this situation limits cycling, like skydiving or mountaineering, to a small subset of the population. This is serious because cycling is so socially and economically useful, unlike those other activities.

3rd February. Paul Gannonxx

A few background comments on the Royal College St and Bloomsbury tracks may be helpful. The original proposal for RCS suggested closing both Pratt St and Plender St junctions to all except local access traffic; motor traffic would have been diverted via Crowndale Rd and up on to RCS, creating a largely motor traffic free area and removing some rat runs. The Plender St route is a major part of the Camden Town gyratory.

Similarly in Bloomsbury the junctions at either side of Gordon Square and south of Tavistock Sq.

would have been closed to motor traffic (which would have been diverted via Woburn PI and Endsleigh Gdns). The Gordon Square junction is part of the major taxi and commercial traffic rat run to Euston Station and Euston Road. These original proposals would have left the major segments of both tracks with only signalized junctions at main London motor traffic roads (effectively motorways overlaid on inner London streets).

Also, according to our proposals, the Bloomsbury track would have been significantly wider and would not have switched back and forth across the road. This would have required the introduction of some one-way working of motor-traffic (on parts of Torrington PI & Tavistock PI). These proposals were not implemented by the council for a variety of reasons, but essentially because the political will did not exist with sufficient support for the project at the critical stage. Support for the original go-ahead came from councillors in the Streets Committee. But, Camdens change from committee system to executive system, coincidentally or not, also marked the point at which that support became insufficient i.e. at the point at which implementation details had to be tackled.

It does seem to me that a lot of the criticisms of the RCS and Bloomsbury tracks on this list would be addressed by better implementation and specifically the points above about the junctions. Tony Rs view seems to be that the problems of technical implementation of tracks are too great to be overcome and all implementations must be more dangerous and counter-productive and that by proposing changes at the junctions, I am really recommending one more dose of snake oil. However, my three-year experience of using Dutch cycling infrastructure makes me quite certain that a high-quality implementation is possible if the political will exists, or can be developed, to build it, so I see no overriding reason to reject continental experience to fit an a priori assumption that cycle tracks are inherently bad. Quality of design and implementation are essential and in Britain that is what is absent.

So, another controlling factor could be that British local authorities and the road engineering profession simply lack the experience and desire to implement such projects effectively. One example is the total mess that is the TfL unit that handles traffic signals. Its bureaucratic structure makes it a bottleneck on developments, with the adoption of second-best design options in order to avoid needing work by the signals unit. Obviously this makes cycle tracks and other facilities requiring signals work to be effectively ruled out (similarly London has no traffic lights controlled by buses, a technology that is 25 plus years old, but way beyond the capabilities of one of the worlds richest cities, or beyond its governmental structure anyway).

However, I think that the weaknesses identified in the implementation of these tracks are not evidence of poor British engineering capabilities or the inherent failings of cyce tracks, but are in fact evidence of our political weakness, our inability to create sufficient political support for effective measures.

One thing that comes up frequently in this discussion is some determining reference to The War. I dont get this at all, unless it is viewed as another expression of Britains debilitating historico-mythical attitudes to WWII and to other Europeans. For a start the differences in wartime experience and post-war condition of countries as diverse as the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Switzerland and parts of Germany, must a surely of itself make nonsense of the idea.

What mattered were the differences in post-war policy decisions, made by central and local government, to support or to discourage cycling. Decisions made in the late 1970s and 1980s, and reinforced in the 1990s and 2000s, led to the construction of high-quality cycle networks which led to the maintainence of mass use of cycling as a mode of transport (and all this is documented, so there should be no need to prolong The War style theories).

Given that cycle tracks mean an enormously more pleasant cycling experience and sustain a mass cycling culture, Ive never really been able to understand why so many British cycle activists get so worked up about the subject.

It also seems to me that one thing is quite clear from the statistics. The countries with lots of good quality cycle tracks have balanced gender profiles among cyclists, and many more older cyclists, than in London and the UK generally. It seems to me that our policy should, AS ITS PRIMARY AIM, seek to address the factors which retard take up of cycling specifically among women and older people, rather than simply stimulating further growth among the present user-profile, which is grotesquely distorted towards the younger male. So Ive also often wondered why British cycle activists turn a blind eye to the highly distorted gender-bias of the context of cycling in Britain.