

## DEPUTATION THREE – LEEDS CYCLE ACTION GROUP

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Could you please make your speech to Council, which should not be longer than five minutes, and could you please begin by introducing yourself and then the people in your Deputation.

MS E REATHER: Thank you. My Lord Mayor and fellow Council Members, my name is Lizzie Reather and with me are Chris Boulton, Dave Holt, Kevin Cooney and Martin Bennett. We represent Leeds' cyclists and are here to bring the Councillors' attention to the contribution cycling can make to the Council's objectives on health and wellbeing, climate change and economic growth and to the current poor consideration of cycling within the Council's programmes.

Although in recent years cycling has become a pleasant, popular and convenient way of getting around many cities, in Leeds take-up is still extremely low. Leeds's strategy documents are positive about walking and cycling but these modes of transport are treated as afterthoughts in policy implementation.

The benefits of a large shift away from private motor vehicles to cycling include

1. better health and wellbeing through increased physical activity;
2. environmental benefits, improved air quality and reductions in carbon emissions;  
and
3. reduced traffic congestion.

Sixty per cent of all journeys are less than five miles, a distance that can easily be cycled by most adults. Many European cities have levels of cycling far greater than the UK and even within the UK Leeds compares unfavourably with many other cities. We are failing to give Leeds people choice in transport, especially those who are financially stretched or do not have access to a car. Instead of aspiring to put more cars on Leeds's roads, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups could be enabled to travel easily and cheaply by bicycle.

Why do so few people cycle in Leeds? A recent survey concluded that the biggest barrier is the perceived danger from traffic, especially for those new to cycling. At present motor vehicles are prioritised, but cyclists are – and need to be seen to be – legitimate users of the roads. While off-road routes are helpful, especially for new cyclists, they cannot be used after dark or in bad weather.

If the road environment were to be made as welcoming as possible, Leeds could move to a virtuous circle where many people engage in cycling and walking as normal and sensible transport choices.

Five obvious actions are

- 1 Allocate a fair and proper proportion of road space in all improvement schemes. Excellent guidance is available from the Department for Transport, but this is mostly ignored by Leeds; planners, who aim to maximise capacity and speed, effectively pushing vulnerable users off the road;

2. Implement all the planned Core Cycling Network routes, maintain them properly and ensure they can easily be accessed by cyclists on all types of bike;
3. Limit speeds to 20 mph in all residential areas. This has local benefits far beyond cycling and walking.
4. Use the planning system to ensure employers and businesses provide cycle parking for customers and changing facilities for their staff;
5. Use existing Council communications to publicise the benefits of cycling and the new routes and facilities that are already available.

Leeds lags woefully behind other Authorities in making good use of cycling as a sensible transport choice. Cycling can make a vital contribution to your targets on climate change, health and wellbeing and economic growth.

Please, seize the opportunity to put active travel at the heart of your policy developments. It is time for action rather than warm words. If you challenge the present dismissive attitude towards cycling, the people of Leeds will get on their bikes. Thank you for your attention. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, I move that the matter be referred to Executive Board for further consideration.

COUNCILLOR LOBLEY: I second, my Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: *(A vote was taken)* That is CARRIED.

Lizzie, thank you for attending and for what you have said. You will be kept informed of the consideration which your comments will receive. Thank you and good afternoon. *(Applause)*