

# Northern Ireland Cycling Initiative

Mrs Siobhan Toland  
Environmental Health Manager (Environmental Protection)  
Belfast City Council  
The Cecil Ward Building  
4-10 Linen Hall Street  
Belfast  
BT2 8BP

4<sup>th</sup> September 2005

Dear Madam

## **Submission on the draft Air Quality Action Plan**

I am writing to you on behalf of the Northern Ireland Cycling Initiative.

The NICI is campaigning for:

- Improved cycling infrastructure to provide safe convenient cycle routes suitable for people of all ages and abilities,
- Linking homes to school, work, shops, public transport and amenities.
- Cycling as a cheaper, healthier, cleaner alternative to the car.
- In Northern Ireland 65% of all journeys are less than 5 miles. Such journeys are healthier by bicycle than car and in congested urban areas many would be faster by bicycle.
- Cycling and walking are sustainable, socially inclusive, neighbourly ways to travel and easily integrate exercise into the daily routine on a cost neutral, non-interventionist basis.

The NICI thanks the council for inviting response to the consultation on the draft Air Quality Action Plan. The NICI comments as follows:

### **1. Initiatives to promote greater levels of walking and cycling within Belfast.**

NICI welcomes the various initiatives proposed. However the NICI know that the initiatives do not go far enough. Piecemeal traffic calming does not increase cycling. Area wide traffic speed reductions to 20mph such as seen in Freiburg Germany, Hilden Germany and Copenhagen must be introduced to improve cycling and walking conditions.

Hilden a city of 57,000 in the wealthy Ruhr Valley spends less than £8,000 per annum on cycling provision yet 25% trips are done by bicycle.

The modal shift is achieved by area wide speed reduction to 20mph and placing cycling and walking at the core of transport and congestion solving problems rather than treating walking and cycling as troublesome bolt ons to transport policy.

**2-5. NICI have no comment on items.**

**6. Proposals that will lead to improved roads and highways**

NICI is concerned that some of these proposals will generate increased traffic volume through network capacity maximisation leading to congestion elsewhere in Belfast. NICI advocate directing resources to modal shift and car constraint particularly as over 47% of households in Belfast do not have access to a car.

**7. NICI have no comment on item 7**

**General comment**

NICI note that much of the vehicle traffic in Belfast is generated outside the Belfast City Council boundaries. No reference is made in the draft to the attitude of other councils within the Greater Belfast area to air quality in Belfast and the link between traffic generation in these council areas that create air quality problems in Belfast.

There is no reference in the document to political leadership, exemplars, sustainable transport champions or car constraint. The NICI suggest that Belfast City Councillors should cycle or use public transport when attending Council meetings. Free work place parking for Council employees should be removed as an example to the rest of the employers in the City.

Yours faithfully

T McClelland  
on behalf of the NICI Steering Group