

# The Northern Ireland Cycling Initiative

6 Tullyrusk Road, Dundrod BT29 4JA

[www.nici.org.uk](http://www.nici.org.uk)

Paul Turley  
Senior Auditor  
NI Audit Office  
106 University Street  
Belfast  
BT1 7EU

12<sup>th</sup> December 2005

Dear Mr Turley

## **NIAO Examination of Road Safety in Northern Ireland**

Thank you for inviting the Northern Ireland Cycling Initiative to respond to the NIAO study into road safety in Northern Ireland.

The NICI is a local voluntary organisation funded by its own members and is affiliated to the Irish Cycling Campaign Network, the Cycling Campaign Network of Great Britain and the European Cycling Federation.

We campaign for:

- Improved infrastructure to provide safe convenient cycling 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 believes that current transport policy and the Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategy 2002 – 2012, insufficiently protects vulnerable road users in Northern Ireland who choose a healthy, sustainable and economical form of transport.

Vulnerable road users lives and health are sacrificed and freedoms curtailed to enable free movement of vehicles.

Over the last 30 years road deaths and serious injury far exceed deaths and injury caused by political instability.

Speed review in Northern Ireland has not happened<sup>1</sup> and speed enforcement is limited. Unobtrusive observed speeds have been recorded at 69mph in urban residential areas beside schools<sup>2</sup>.

NICI believes that safety policy should move towards speed limits of 20mph across wide urban areas<sup>3</sup> and subject to proper enforcement. Selected minor rural roads should also be in the scheme.

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<sup>1</sup> NI Road Safety Strategy 2002-2012 Para4.1

<sup>2</sup> Experimental traffic control scheme, motorcycles in bus lanes, final report, DRD August 2005.

<sup>3</sup> NI Road Safety Strategy 2002-2012 Page 42 DRD Action Measure

Research has established that road traffic conflict mph for vulnerable road users is 95% survivable at 20mph, 55% survivable at 30 mph and 5% survivable at 40 mph. Serious injury increases with speed of impact.

There is unreasonable difficulty introducing 20 mph zones, which we understand is caused by over weighting of objections to proposed 20 mph zones. Objections carry more weight than the benefits available to vulnerable road users.

Cycle review mentioned in the draft road safety strategy and the NI Cycling Strategy still does not appear to be in the public demesne.

Research has shown that fear of traffic suppresses<sup>4</sup> both walking and cycling.

Road safety is not a self-contained issue. Road safety cuts across many other government policies including health and the promotion of daily-integrated physical activity, urban regeneration and the public realm, child development both physical and emotional, job accessibility, environment and air quality.

Regrettably the Road Safety Strategy makes no mention of the danger reduction principle. Danger reduction involves tackling the root cause of death and injury on the road, namely the volume and speed of motorised traffic<sup>5</sup>. Pedestrians and cyclists do not cause death or injury to other road users. The Environment Transport and Regional Affairs committee (30<sup>th</sup> June 2001) noted *"pedestrians are treated with contempt.....rather than slowing down traffic to make walking pleasant, most authorities have a policy of accident reduction which makes it all but impossible"*.

This warning from Westminster has not been heeded in Northern Ireland.

The Regional Transport Strategy focused on increasing network capacity and increasing network speeds. Cycling and walking were noted in the Transport hierarchy of the transport Strategy but measures to enhance walking and cycling throughout Northern Ireland were not implemented on a wide scale.

Should you wish to meet with me I can be contacted on 028 9267 4121.

Sincerely

Tom McClelland

Chair NICI Steering Group

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<sup>4</sup> Slower Speeds Initiative

<sup>5</sup> PSNI Road Traffic Casualty Statistics