



**Cycling petition survey**  
FINAL REPORT

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## Cycling petition survey report – final

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## Cycling petition survey report – final

### Executive summary

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Cycling is a green, healthy, cost-effective and quick mode of transport and should be encouraged wherever possible.

Newcastle's air quality is deteriorating and car ownership is on the increase [Ref 1]. Child and adult overweight and obesity levels alarm officials in the Northeast [Ref 2].

A cycling commuter started a safe cycling petition on 11 April 2010 after being disappointed by the local authority's approach to cycling in Newcastle city centre. The online survey was open for four weeks and resulted in over 800 local people supporting the petition.

A policy document review revealed that the written framework in support of cycling is in place and it is the will and subsequent action that is currently lacking.

The survey clearly demonstrates that a strong cycling community already exists despite the adverse cycling conditions in Newcastle city centre, and also, that there is excellent potential to built on this and increase the numbers of cyclists, if more and safer provision could be made available in the city centre to achieve the Newcastle City Council's vision :

*"cosmopolitan European City Centre of unique character which : <...> Is highly accessible with high quality public transport which encourages use of sustainable modes and reduces congestion. A high quality environment which ensures safety and convenience for pedestrians and cyclists"* [Ref 3]

There is increased pressure on local authorities from government to integrate and encourage cycling.

Department of Transport	[Ref 4]	<a href="#">Cycle to work guarantee</a>	[video 3:06min]
All-party parliamentary group	[Ref 5]	<a href="#">Study tour 2010</a>	[video 5:21min]



## Cycling petition survey report – final

### 1 Introduction

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A regular Newcastle city centre bike commuter, Katja Leyendecker, started a cycling petition survey on Sunday 11 April 2010, ending on Monday 10 May 2010.

The reason of the survey was to determine whether there was sufficient strength of support amongst the cycling community, including potential cyclists, that cycling should be made into a safer activity in Newcastle city centre. Conversely, the petition coordinator's premise was that currently cycling in the city centre is neither a pleasant nor a safe undertaking.

During its four weeks (twenty working days) the online survey recorded over 800 responses in support of the safe cycling initiative for central Newcastle. [Refer to [appendix A](#) for the online survey layout.]

In addition to the online survey a website [www.katlayout.co.uk](http://www.katlayout.co.uk) was set up to publicise the cycling petition, dispense information on progress as well as provide collated data and feedback from the survey back to its supporters. [Refer to [appendix B](#) for the website pages.]

Various outgoing communications took place such as email updates, 'sound bite' summaries, letters to schools, parliamentary candidates, city councillors and a press release. [These communications can be seen in [appendix C](#).]

Via the press release, the survey also attracted media coverage. [Refer to [appendix D](#).]

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## 2 Background

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### 2.1 Personal background

Before the petition survey, the author had been in contact with the council for more than a year to exchange views on adequacy of cycling facilities in Newcastle city centre.

The coordinator

- ➔ contacted the office of the chief executive
- ➔ once located, browsed its cycling website
- ➔ conversed with the council's cycling officer
- ➔ conversed with the councillor's cycling champion
- ➔ attended the Newcastle cycling forum.

The author felt that the information available and quality of responses provided did not match the high status that cycling should and could enjoy in our city - a status of cycling which is laid out in strategy and policy documents on national, regional and council levels. [Also refer to References section.]

### 2.2 National background

Listed below is the national backdrop for subsequent regional and local policies. The documents date back to the nineties and set an early national picture for cycling and the importance placed on it.

The *cycling in great Britain* report describes the historical background. [Ref 6]

- ➔ page 4 – Cycling is an economical, environmentally friendly and healthy mode of transport. It is also a realistic means of transport, especially for short local trips which make up many of our everyday journeys. The Government's statement of policy on cycling in June 1994 indicated an intention to easier, safer and more convenient.

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- ➔ page 6 – In terms of road traffic, cycling declined from 37 per cent in 1949 to just 1 percent in 1995. During this period, increasing affluence led to greater choice in the available modes of transport to work.

The *national cycling strategy* sets targets to be achieved with local authorities being the delivery 'vehicle'. [Ref 7]

- ➔ page 4 – objective : to increase cycle use
- ➔ page 4 – central target : double the number of trips by cycle (on 1996 figures) by end 2002 – quadruple the number of trips by cycle (on 1996 figures) by end 2012
- ➔ page 4 – local target : local authorities and other transport providers and trip generators to set local targets which will contribute to the central target to increase cycle use
- ➔ page 7 - cycling accounts for less than 2% of trips in the UK, compared to 10% in Sweden, 11% in Germany, 15% in Switzerland and 18% in Denmark. <...> The UK has neither an unusual geography, climate or economy. In Switzerland there are more hills, Sweden has colder winters and Germany higher car ownership, yet each has five times the share of bicycle trips.

The *integrated transport white paper* assesses progress and makes further observations and recommendations. [Ref 8]

- ➔ page xvii - There was also widespread agreement with the White Paper's conclusion that there is considerable potential for more walking and cycling. However, this potential will only be realised if these activities are made safe and pleasant.
- ➔ <cont.> This has not happened yet, and attempts to improve matters have too often been half-hearted: the plethora of white lines, denoting cycle lanes, have not been effective. Witnesses doubted whether local authorities would make these modes of transport a priority, especially since the culture of highway engineers, charged with



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implementing these plans, has not traditionally been sympathetic to them, and many councillors are of a similar view.

- ➔ <cont.> The Government will need to ensure that there is an increase in both walking and cycling by the allocation of funds and by monitoring the implementation of Local Transport Plans.
- ➔ page xviii - Safer routes for cyclists and pedestrians are also a matter of better designed and engineered schemes, which local authorities will be encouraged to adopt in their Local Transport Plans.

*National planning policy guidance 13* reaffirms the cycling context and describes the status of cycling in local transport decision-making. [Ref 9]

- ➔ 78. Cycling also has potential to substitute for short car trips, particularly those under 5km, and to form part of a longer journey by public transport.
- ➔ <cont.> Local authorities are required to produce a local cycling strategy as part of their local transport plan. They should actively seek to establish partnerships for action with other public bodies, commercial organisations and voluntary sector groups.
- ➔ 81. Local planning authorities should take a more pro-active approach towards the implementation of planning policies on transport <...>
- ➔ 84. Planning obligations may be used to achieve improvements to public transport, walking and cycling, where such measures would be likely to influence travel patterns to the site involved, either on their own or as part of a package of measures.
- ➔ <cont.> Examples might include improvements to a bus service or cycle route which goes near to the site, or pedestrian improvements which make it easier and safer to walk to the site from other developments or from public transport <...>
- ➔ 85. Planning obligations where appropriate in relation to transport should be based around securing improved accessibility to sites by all modes, with the emphasis on achieving the greatest degree of access by public transport, walking and cycling.



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### 2.3 Regional background

With respect then to regional and local documentation relating to cycling, a *Tyne and Wear local transport plan* (LTP2) is currently in force with LTP3 in preparation. The LTP2 contains a regional cycling strategy, referring to the local cycling strategy for each local authority. [Ref 10]

- The Plan Partners, in cooperation with local and national cycling organisations such as CTC, Tynebikes, Sustrans and local health partnerships, aim to reduce barriers to cycling in Tyne and Wear.
- The Partners hope that increased cycling will contribute to improved road safety and provide greater accessibility for everyone, reduce congestion and help improve air quality
- The Plan Partners' overarching aim is to reduce reliance on the private motor vehicle, in order to reduce congestion, improve air quality and increase levels of physical activity.
- The Tyne and Wear Cycling Strategy is designed as an umbrella document for the five local authorities' own cycling strategies
- The following will be considered as part of the planning application: The main cycle routes to and through the development <...>
- Hierarchy of provision :
  - Traffic reduction. Can traffic volumes be reduced sufficiently to achieve the desired improvements in attractiveness and safety? Can heavy lorries be restricted or diverted?
  - Speed reduction. Can speeds be reduced and driver behaviour modified to achieve the desired results?
  - Junction treatment and traffic management. Can the problems that cyclists encounter, particularly accident locations, be solved by specific junction treatment or other traffic management solutions such as contraflow cycle lanes and priority traffic signals?



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- Redistribution of the carriageway. Can the carriageway be redistributed to give more space to cyclists, perhaps in conjunction with bus lanes?
- Cycle lanes (on-road) and cycle tracks (off-road). Having considered and, where possible, implemented the above, what specific cycle lanes or tracks are now necessary?
- Shared use of the footway. This should normally be discouraged as it has proven to be an unsatisfactory solution for both cyclists and pedestrians. The DfT has repeatedly stated in guidance that shared use of the footway by cyclists should be considered only as a last resort.

The *regional spatial strategy* [Ref 11], also puts emphasis on cycling especially in its close relation to climate change and sustainability.

- ➔ page 19 - Social Objectives <...> to ensure good accessibility for all to jobs, facilities, goods and services in the Region particularly by public transport, walking and cycling; to reduce the need to travel by private car
- ➔ page 22 - Climate Change <...> focus substantial new development on locations with good accessibility by sustainable transport modes, particularly public transport, walking and cycling
- ➔ page 24 - All sites should be in locations that are, or will be, well related to homes, jobs and services by all modes of transport, particularly public transport, walking and cycling.
- ➔ page 35 - Reducing the impact of travel demand particularly by promoting public transport, travel plans, cycling and walking; reducing the need to travel long distances, particularly by private car, by focusing development in urban areas that have good access to public transport and for cyclists and pedestrians, and by encouraging home-working and improving electronic communications
- ➔ page 75 - Important considerations in developing the economy in a more sustainable way include being close to an available workforce; accessibility by public transport,



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cycling and walking; promoting self sufficiency with indigenous businesses locally producing goods and services; and making optimum use of existing infrastructure.

- ➡ page 78 - is served by high levels of public transport, walking and cycling, particularly through the development of workplace travel plans

### 2.4 Local background

With regards to a local cycling strategy, the current strategy (adopted by the council) dates back to 1998 and would benefit from updating. A draft has been circulated in 2007 or so and is available through the cycling forum, however progress towards adoption appears slow. In summary, Newcastle does not currently have a adopted cycling strategy and no further comment can be made as to its content or quality.

Newcastle city council recently passed a climate change declaration [Ref 12]. The cycling-related points are excerpted below.

- ➡ “As a Council we will provide leadership by facilitating new ways of working which avoid the need to bring a private car to work and encourage more of our staff to cycle and walk to work.”
- ➡ “With partners, we will also aim to promote lower carbon methods of travel, aiming for a 4% reduction in fuel use through walking, cycling and better use of public transport by 2020.”

As part of the (trans-authorities) Tyne & Wear local transport plan, local authorities have been required to draw up further local plans. A city centre area action plan ‘key issues and development options’ has been prepared in 2006 and lays out the council’s vision and plan for the city centre. Excerpts from that plan are bulleted below. [Ref 3]

- ➡ page 5 - Newcastle City Centre will be a cosmopolitan European City Centre of unique character which : <...> Is highly accessible with high quality public transport which encourages use of sustainable modes and reduces congestion. A high quality environment which ensures safety and convenience for pedestrians and cyclists.



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- ➔ page 8 – The city contains a relatively moderate amount of pedestrianisation and open spaces. Many pedestrians routes through the centre are heavily focused and reliant on shopping streets and covered walkway / malls. There is a lack of well defined networks of routes for cycling.
- ➔ page 9 - key objectives <...> to link up different areas of the city for walking and cycling.
- ➔ Page 11 – creating a connected cycle network : there are a number of fragmented and disconnected cycle network in the within the City Centre.

### 2.5 Closing remark

In summary, a clear policy focus is put on cycling as a sustainable (climate-change mitigating), clean and healthy mode of transport, with special attention given to journeys up to five kilometres (three miles).

It is further recognised that there are barriers to cycling that require to be overcome in order to encourage more people to take up cycling as a preferred mode of transport for short journeys.

It is acknowledged that barriers might exist within organisations to fully integrate cycling into their work streams.



### 3 Online petition survey

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The online petition survey was set up on Sunday 11 April 2010 and closed on Monday 10 May 2010. Its primary aim was to gauge the strength of public support in favour of improved cycling in the city centre (question 1). A secondary aim was to collate details on participants' preferences, cycling activities and potential increase in cycling activities (questions 2-4). The survey also provided the opportunity to leave a comment, email address and postcode.

The survey ran under the title of 'safe city centre cycling in Newcastle'. [Refer to [appendix A](#) for the layout of the online petition survey.]

#### 3.1 Question 1

##### 3.1.1 I support the petition to Newcastle City Council to provide safe cycling routes through the city centre.

The available choice of answers was 'Yes' or 'No' with only one answer possible.

An active choice was required to be made by the participant to support the petition.

#### 3.2 Question 2

##### 3.2.1 I am particularly interested in the improvement of the city centre's...

- North-South axis (Haymarket to Central Station/Quayside)
- West-East axis (West End to Byker/Heaton)
- Both routes

#### 3.3 Question 3

##### 3.3.1 I cycle regularly for the following reasons.

- Commuting
- Leisure
- Racing
- Touring



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Other

### 3.4 Question 4

#### 3.4.1 Safer cycling routes through the city centre would make me use my bike more often.

The available choice of answers was 'Yes' or 'No' with only one answer possible.

### 3.5 Further details

Participants were then prompted to leave their email address and their postcode, both on an entirely voluntary basis.

The participant was then asked "Anything else on your mind? Leave your comment here."

After which the contact details of the coordinator were clearly stated (name, postal address, email address and mobile phone number), as well as the petition survey's website address [www.katlayout.co.uk](http://www.katlayout.co.uk).



## 4 Analysis

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### 4.1 General section

For a numerical summary of the analysis refer to [appendix E](#).

### 4.2 Survey questions

**Question 1 - I support the petition to Newcastle City Council to provide safe cycling routes through the city centre.**

<b>Number of supporting responses</b>	<b>803</b>
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The petition survey received 803 responses in support of the safe cycling initiative.

Four responses were received against the petition i.e. deliberate selection of 'No' to question 1. Three of these were anonymous (no email address or postcode) with no comment provided, and no further conclusion can be drawn to their reason. The fourth was concerned about striking the right balance for accessibility to the city centre by different modes of transport. All four have not been counted towards the total of 803 responses in support of the petition.

The number responses should be described as significant.

- When e-petitioning Number 10 (online petition system to the Prime Minister), 500 signatures trigger a written response from the Prime Minister's office.
- A month-long residents' consultation by Newcastle City Council on the proposed Gosforth transport improvements in late 2009 yielded 1,000 responses and contributed to a major scheme bid (>£5m) by the council.

**Question 2 - I am particularly interested in the improvement of the city centre's...**



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Both routes	70% or 565 responses
North-South axis	20% or 156 responses
West-East axis	10% or 81 responses

An overall improvement of all routes (North-South and West East) is supported by the majority of respondents (70%). If, however an exclusive decision was required to be made, a slight preference would exist towards the North-South axis with double the amount of responses received in favour.

### Question 3 - I cycle regularly for the following reasons.

Commuting	80% or 641 responses
Leisure	79% or 633 responses
Touring	15% or 115 responses
Other	9% or 71 responses
Racing	7% or 54 responses

At 80% commuting cyclists make a high proportion of the petition survey participants. It is assumed that a number of these cyclist commute regularly in the city centre (cross-referencing with the local postcodes collected).

There also is a high share of leisure cyclists at 79%. This correlates well with the commuting population as 76% of all bike commuters also cycle for leisure.

Cycling offers a variety of activities. Other cycling activities such as touring (15%), racing (7%), shopping and other (9%) also make up regular activities for bike users.

### Question 4 - Safer cycling routes through the city centre would make me use my bike more often.

<b>Yes</b>	<b>93% or 746 responses</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>7% or 57 responses</b>

93% describe the current cycling conditions in the city centre as a hindrance to their cycling. There is an indication that more people would cycle, and people would cycle more, if the city centre would be made safer for cycling.

### 4.3 Email addresses

**Number of email addresses on database 651 or 81% of responses**

A huge number of email addresses has been collated during the survey and has been securely placed on the database for potential further action, follow-up, survey, questionnaires etc.

The email addresses are confidential data and have not been made available as part of this report.

Please contact the author/survey coordinator Katja Leyendecker to discuss future use of the email address database by councillors and council officers alike.

### 4.4 Postcodes

<b>Number of post codes provided</b>	<b>673</b>	<b>or 84% of responses</b>
<b>Postcode breakdown (first five only)</b>	<b>NE3</b>	<b>22% or 147 responses</b>
	<b>NE6</b>	<b>12% or 78 responses</b>
	<b>NE2</b>	<b>10% or 66 responses</b>
	<b>NE7</b>	<b>6% or 41 responses</b>
	<b>NE4</b>	<b>5% or 32 responses</b>

It is clear that a high proportion of participants are within the five kilometre (three mile) cyclable city centre catchment.



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For the complete set of ranked postcodes refer to [appendix F](#).

### 4.5 Analysis of the comments received

**Number of comments provided 288**

**Over one in three participants (36%) left a comment voluntarily.**

The survey's main aim was to determine the strength of public support for improving cycling facilities in Newcastle city centre and subsequently to petition the city council. Hence every voluntary comment provided is a clear indication that a strong sentiment exists to improve cycling in the city centre, as one in every three participants took the time to leave feedback.

It should be noted that the comments analysis is solely based on this voluntary feedback and the percentages stated might therefore not accurately reflect participants' concerns. (Further investigation may be necessary to determine user preferences.)

Listed below is an attempted categorisation of the comments.

**Conflict with others 45% or 130 responses**

**Conflict with clear reference to personal safety 37% or 105 responses**

**Dedicated continuous segregated cycle facility 31% or 90 responses**

Cyclists do clearly recognise the conflict between pedestrians, vehicular traffic and themselves (45%). A large proportion actively translates this conflict into their own vulnerability and concern about their safety (37%).

The concern for their safety possibly prevents some from cycling entirely or cycling more. The latter part of this statement is certainly supported by the 93% of respondents stating that they would cycle more with safer facilities (question 4).

Frequently used words in the comments were

➡ "scary" / "scared"



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⇒ “dangerous” / “unsafe”

⇒ “nightmare”

This safety concern could be a perceived or a real concern, in any case it prevents people from cycling more or cycling at all.

Specific city centre locations have been mentioned in the comment demonstrating that local people participated in the survey (also supported by postcodes collated). Some locations have been mentioned repeatedly, the ‘popular’ city centre hotpots are listed below.

⇒ Northumberland Street

⇒ Central station

⇒ John Dobson Street

⇒ Newgate Street/ New Eldon Square

The survey comments are a clear call for a **continuous** and **separate** cycle network in the city centre, all part of an overall **cohesive** strategic plan (31%). The participants believed that by doing so cycling would be safer.

Other obstacles to cycling as mentioned in the comments are listed below.

⇒ Maintenance

⇒ Car parking on cycle lanes

⇒ End-of-journey facilities

⇒ Concerned about next generation

⇒ Signage

⇒ Bike on metro

Some comments were of a visionary nature. Newcastle was seen as a town with great potential for national cycling recognition. Safe cycling education, promotion and implementation also being mentioned as vital to our economic and environmental



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prosperity. A sense of urgency was stated in some comments – by inaction or indecisiveness not to ‘miss the boat’ on the benefits that cycling provides such as health, quality of life, environmental, economic, sustainability (climate change).

For the complete set of all 288 comments, unabridged and unaltered, refer to [appendix G](#), where the comments are listed with the first part of the participant’s postcode (where available).

## 5 Conclusions

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- A. Policies are in place for cycling [see Background section] - it is the implementation of these policies that is lagging behind.
- B. There is a high public interest in cycling and improving cycling conditions in the city centre (and beyond) would boost cycling i.e. see more people cycle and people cycle more.
- C. There is great potential to improve city centre cycling as there are a number of large developments 'in the pipeline' for the city centre (notably East Pilgrim Street) and a real opportunity exists to 're-invent' the centre and fully integrate cycling into that vision that the city centre area action plan so vividly describes as below.

"cosmopolitan European City Centre of unique character which : <...> Is highly accessible with high quality public transport which encourages use of sustainable modes and reduces congestion. A high quality environment which ensures safety and convenience for pedestrians and cyclists"

- D. Sadly an opportunity has seemingly been missed on the New Eldon Square development. However retrofitting a cycle lane would be an option.
- E. The communication lines, roles, responsibilities and duties are unclear to the public. People are passed from 'pillar to post' when trying to communicate with the council on the subject of cycling.
- F. Cycling ticks many boxes: health, transport, sustainability/climate change. That it appears on so many agendas is perversely one of the impediments to change. With suitable organised oversight however the shared benefits could be realised and in particular could lead to funding opportunities for improvements



## 6 Recommendations

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A. Implementation of the strategies and policies already in place.

**Lead : exec office/board of directors.**

B. Educate public servants (transportation, planning, engineers, project managers) and provide a clear framework for cycling with clear lines of responsibilities and communications.

**Lead : exec office/board of directors.**

C. Reaffirm the role of the cycling officer and councillors' cycling champion.

**Lead : exec office/board of directors.**

D. The cycling forum is in need of a reaffirmation as to its purpose and level of responsibility, and would benefit heavily from a 'constitution statement' which must be ratified by the executive managers/board.

**Lead : cycling officer seeking exec approval.**

E. Newcastle requires an adopted relevant cycling strategy immediately.

**Lead : cycling officer.**

F. Identify a strategic cycling network, preferably continuous and separate from motorised traffic where possible, and firmly integrate this network into the city planning context. Traffic monitoring and a further cycling survey could be considered to establish conflicts, route preferences and find an integrated solution. Implement the construction of the network. Consider retrofitting cycling facilities at New Eldon Square, now.

**Lead: cycling officer.**

G. Cyclists would like to be more involved, and feel they have not been considered or consulted sufficiently. Council officers making cycling decisions should be cycling themselves to understand the benefits and dangers of cycling.

**Lead : cycling officer.**

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### 7 References

The referenced items are all publicly available documents and listed in forward chronological order.

No.	Year	Level	Title	Author/editor	File size
1	2007 ?	regional	<a href="#">Air quality delivery plan</a>	Councils of the region	n/a
2	2010	regional	<a href="#">Press release</a>	NHS Northeast	n/a
3	2009	national	Cycle to work guarantee (video 3:06min)  <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4RyMda7QbTQ">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4RyMda7QbTQ</a>	Department of Transport	n/a
4	2010	national	Study tour 2010 (video 5:21min)  <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZrtYa89aE5E">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZrtYa89aE5E</a>	All-party parliamentary group	n/a
5	2006	local	<a href="#">City centre area action plan</a>	NCC	[5.6Mb]
6	1996	national	<a href="#">Cycling in Great Britain - transport statistics report</a>	DoT	[1.8Mb]
7	1996	national	<a href="#">National cycling strategy</a>	DoT	[2.6Mb]
8	1998	national	<a href="#">Integrated transport white paper</a> ISBN 0102255997	House of Commons	[8.1Mb]
9	2001	national	<a href="#">Planning policy guidance 13 -</a>	ODPM now	[0.03Mb]



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No.	Year	Level	Title	Author/editor	File size
			<a href="#">transport (cycling excerpt)</a>	CLG	
10	2006	regional	<a href="#">Tyne &amp; Wear cycling strategy part of LTP2</a>	Councils of the region	[2.8Mb]
11	2008	regional	<a href="#">Regional spatial strategy</a>	GO-NE	[1.8Mb]
12	2010	local	<a href="#">Minutes of city council meeting on 3 March 2010</a>	City council	n/a