

23 May 2016

THE LAND TRUST'S RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE CYCLING AND WALKING INVESTMENT STRATEGY

Introduction to the Land Trust and reasons for responding

Below is the Land Trust's response to the consultation on the cycling and walking investment strategy.

By way of context for our response; we are the national land management charity that provides cost effective management solutions for sustainably managed open space and green infrastructure. We currently have ownership and/or long term management responsibility for over 2,000 hectares of land with more than 60 spaces (and growing) across England. Further details can be found at www.thelandtrust.org.uk

Our business model enables us to provide high quality and sustainably maintained open spaces that deliver economic, environmental and social benefits and our vision is to improve the quality of people's lives through these sustainable, high quality green spaces.

We believe that green spaces and linear green corridors must play an integral part in helping to deliver the investment strategy, providing connectivity for cycling and walking within safe and attractive areas. Such opportunities not only have the potential to help encourage a much broader take up of cycling and walking but also establish routes within a wider sustainable multifunctional context able to deliver a wider range of benefits to local communities and society as a whole. As such we would urge you in taking forward the strategy to think creatively and go well beyond solutions that merely focus on the cycle lane, path or road corridor.

We have a range of case studies where we can demonstrate active cycling and walking initiatives on our sites and we would be happy to share these with you as part of this work if you wish.

Consultation Questions

Question 1

The Government would be interested to hear views on the approach and actions set out in section 8 of this strategy

First and foremost, we would encourage Government to think about how this strategy will work in a wider context, within the wider environment and as such, become an integral component of “Place Making”.

Currently, the strategy appears quite narrow in its focus on cycling and walking in urban areas and notably streets in isolation of wider opportunities.

We would therefore welcome much stronger reference to wider green spaces and the natural environment as these can encourage people to walk and cycle more as well as bring other benefits, such as health and wellbeing improvements and an improved connection to nature.

Thus, it is important to think beyond solutions for high streets alone and look at all types of rural and urban spaces. For example, rather than just thinking about adding in cycle lanes on main roads, think about how existing infrastructure and spaces can be intertwined, using existing green spaces and creating new areas, which are safer and well maintained to create safer cycling and walking routes. In doing so, we believe that this, this section would be much better being expanded and referred to as ‘Better places’ rather than just ‘Better Streets’.

Secondly, the Better Mobility section needs to show how it will create clear alternative routes away from roads for cyclists/walkers to get to destinations, which can be via parks, along bridleways, canals and rivers, and ensure these are well signposted.

Well maintained green public spaces and green corridors provide safe and attractive spaces for routes to be created that take cyclists and walkers away from other traffic. And when looking within the built environment - embedding green infrastructure into new cycle and walkways should be a high priority, as this creates the pleasant environments providing shade, shelter, calmness, noise barriers, cleaner air and safety, all contributing to encouraging people to change their behaviours and choose cycling / walking over driving.

As mentioned above, by using green spaces for cycling and walking, they become multifunctional spaces and corridors which then provide wider benefits to society, so as well as meeting these objectives, they can help improve health and wellbeing (helping to reduce health conditions associated with sedentary lifestyles) whilst also connecting people with nature.

As a national land management charity, the Land Trust can demonstrate how to help break down the identified barriers (e.g. community severance, good connections, places for people, behaviour change etc.) with our methods for managing well maintained green spaces which encourage people to lead healthier lifestyles though walking, cycling and other exercise. We are also experts in how such areas can be owned, managed and funded for the long-term.

Question 2

The Government would be interested to hear views on the potential roles of national government departments, local government, other public bodies, businesses and the voluntary sector in delivering the strategy and what arrangements could best support partnership working between them.

In order to successfully deliver this strategy, we believe the Government should ensure there is

more joined up collaboration across Government departments, and in particular those involved in urban planning, regeneration, health and the environment. Programmes within this strategy should then be integrated with wider departmental responsibilities leading to a more holistic approach.

A vital element of place making is the natural environment and how it is embedded into the built environment and infrastructure. This needs to be further developed within the strategy because in order to encourage people to walk and cycle, safe and pleasant places need to be provided, and the natural environment is key for achieving this.

There are many third sector organisations and businesses that can help deliver this strategy, but again, it needs to be seen holistically with other elements of 'place'.

As we have stated above, it is therefore important that Government seeks to involve as broad a range of sectors in promoting and delivering the strategy as possible, thereby ensuring that it goes beyond urban high streets and road cycle lanes, and looks across to the health and environmental sectors as well.

The Land Trust works with many partners in the public, private and charity sectors to encourage people to lead healthier lifestyles, such as by walking and cycling in its green spaces. We have over 100km of tracks, paths and cycling routes in our green spaces, which help connect different communities, create opportunities for people to walk and cycle and lead healthier lifestyles. We also have regular health walks, green gym activities and cycling schemes which take place at our sites across the country and these are delivered with partners, such as The Conservation Volunteers, Groundwork and Sustrans.

To evidence this, in the last 12 years, over 100,000 people have joined organised health workouts, volunteering activities and guided walks at our sites, enabling people to lead more active and less sedentary lifestyles as well as spending time outdoors.

In addition, over 45,000 school children have taken part in activities on our parks, providing learning outside of the classroom, providing them more opportunities to be active whilst learning, including participating in walking and cycling programmes.

Further to this, we would also recommend that the Government involves existing sector bodies, such as the [Green Infrastructure Partnership](#) (created by DEFRA) to support delivery.

Question 3

The Government would be interested to hear suggestions and evidence of innovative projects and programmes which could be developed to deliver the objectives outlined in Section 4

When considering wider green spaces and corridors, there is a need to address how these spaces are managed and maintained long-term. Especially in the context of the declining role of local authorities and reductions in budgets for parks maintenance.

The Land Trust was originally established as a HCA funded pilot programme with HM Treasury approval to address such issues and we would be happy to share our innovative model with you. We have seen how the long term investment in green public spaces has changed behaviours and lives, providing safe and accessible areas for people to walk, cycle and lead healthier lifestyles, along with developing our experience in designing our spaces to connect communities and provide safe travel routes.

Further to this, the Land Trust has successfully implemented a number of [Paths for Communities](#) schemes through its green spaces, which have enabled our green spaces to be even more accessible for different communities, encouraging walking and cycling. Therefore, having seen the positive results of this scheme, it would be worth relaunching this programme. However, it would be worth exploring how to make this programme sustainable, so that it could continue beyond the initial funding stream. This could be something to develop in partnership with the private sector.

Question 4

The Government would be interested to hear your views on how to increase cycling and walking in typically under-represented groups (for example women, older people, or those from black, Asian or minority ethnic backgrounds)

Providing green spaces is more than just building in cycle routes and walkways. It is important to incorporate access into green spaces and look at place making as a whole.

Green spaces and green corridors provide much greater opportunities for all groups, including under-represented groups to engage and we have seen how it helps to break down barriers.

For example, the Land Trust’s model provides onsite rangers leading activities to bring community groups together, give people confidence to undertake different activities, meet other people and overcome social barriers. Further details can be seen at: <http://thelandtrust.org.uk/charitable-aims/>

By operating a model which focuses on the long term investment in green spaces, the Land Trust is able to fund rangers and work with partners to engage communities, and this has a positive ripple effect in a community.

The Land Trust has seen success with its rangers working with people with autism, young offenders, older people and people with dementia by using the green spaces as bases for engagement. An example is [Port Sunlight River Park](#), in which Autism Together manages the site locally, working with people with autism.

We would be happy to talk with you further about how we operate.

Question 5

The Government would be interested to hear views on what type of assistance Local Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships would find beneficial to support development of ambitious and high standard Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans

We would expect Local Authorities to play a significant strategic role in developing, promoting and funding schemes across their area. Likewise we would expect the development of cycling and walking initiatives to be integral to LEP priorities and funded accordingly.

We recognise however the changing nature of Local Authority delivery and would not expect Local Authorities to deliver directly on the ground. We would therefore expect them to work with relevant local private and third sector partners accordingly.

The Land Trust is experienced in managing many different types of green spaces and corridors for community benefit. Therefore, we could provide examples of how to deliver such programmes and provide solutions for long term investment in spaces, demonstrating the benefits that green infrastructure has on encouraging people to lead healthier lifestyles, and therefore feeding into infrastructure plans.