

13th April 2015

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about cycling.

Leadership and ambition to increase cycling levels

I believe it is important to make the UK a cycling nation and I would like as many people as possible to feel comfortable to use their bicycle on regular journeys. Clearly the more people who do cycle, the safer cycling will be.

A call to action to local authorities to work with Government to incentivise cycling has been issued in the form of a draft cycling delivery plan. This plan includes actions for the next 10 years focusing on infrastructure developments, cycle-proofing our roads and wider transport infrastructure, and to promoting cycling and walking as sustainable travel choices.

The plan also states a quantified national ambition for increasing cycling, namely to double cycling by 2025 and to increase the percentage of primary school children who usually walk to school from 48 per cent to 55 per cent, by 2025.

Funding for cycling

This Government's spending on cycling has more than doubled since 2010, with £374 million committed between 2011 and 2015. In 2010, Government spending on cycling was around £2 per person, it is now £6 per person. The Government has set a target of reaching a minimum funding package equivalent to £10 per person each year by 2020-21, or sooner if possible, by working with local government and businesses.

Cycle-friendly design standards for all new highway and traffic schemes

I very much believe that cyclists should be considered on all new traffic schemes. I have campaigned in the past for better cycling provision in Reading and will continue to lobby the local council to put cyclists at the heart of their transport strategy in Reading in the future.

I have also recently supported the passage in Parliament of an Infrastructure Bill which included measures designed to create a "Cycling and Walking Investment strategy". This means the Transport Secretary must create a set of cycling objectives to be achieved and make funding available to achieve them. The Transport Secretary must also report to Parliament on progress towards these objectives.

The Government has cut red-tape to give local authorities more flexibility to make sure signs and road markings are safer for cyclists. The Department for Transport is also trialling new dedicated

Alok Sharma, Conservative Parliamentary Candidate for Reading West

cycle streets which would allow councils to put cyclists and motorists on an equal footing on popular cycle routes by banning overtaking.

Road traffic law

As you may already know, I have supported the campaign to toughen sentences for those convicted of causing death by dangerous driving after two of my cycling constituents were killed by a reckless driver in 2014. I led a Parliamentary debate and have held meetings with the Minister for Road Safety and the Prime Minister on this issue.

The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012, introduced by this Government also introduces the new offence of ‘causing serious injury by dangerous driving’ and will more than double the current maximum sentence of two years, allowing the courts to impose tougher punishments on dangerous drivers.

In March this year, I supported the launch of the cross-party ‘Criminal Drivers Manifesto for Change’. The manifesto was put together following a parliamentary summit held on 1st December 2014, to discuss why so many cases involving people who have been killed or maimed as a result of reckless, criminal driving do not lead to fair justice for victims and their families. Attending the summit were many of these families, including those who had tragically lost a loved one. Also in attendance were organisations and charities Brake, RoadPeace, Institute of Advanced Motorists and cycling charity CTC.

The Ministry of Justice is currently carrying out a review of all driving related offences and penalties and I will continue to campaign for change that puts victims at the heart of the system and better considers the rights of cyclists.

Funding of cycle skills training

I very much support the funding of cycle skills training and I am pleased that this year more children will enjoy Bikeability training than ever before, and almost three-quarters of a million more will get training over the next two years.

I hope that you find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely,



Alok Sharma