



6 June 2012

Rt Hon Nick Clegg MP
Deputy Prime Minister
70 Whitehall
London
SW1P 3AE

By Post

Dear Deputy Prime Minister,

We note with interest your suggestion that the Coalition Government has plans to increase state-backed investment in infrastructure to kick start growth in the economy. We know that in this country 'infrastructure' is generally taken to mean such things as roads and railways. We would like to put in a plea for another kind of infrastructure spending, one too often overlooked despite providing the same jobs and business for construction firms in the short term as conventional projects - with the added long term benefits of serving to reduce congestion, pollution and climate emissions, while improving the health of the nation: Cycling infrastructure.

You must know yourself, being half Dutch, what streets, roads and routes designed for bicycles look like. You may have considered it to be something uniquely Dutch and irrelevant to the UK where so few journeys are made by bike. Yet the Dutch cycle network has been developed through sustained investment over 40 years after the people of the Netherlands realised car-centric development was ultimately unsustainable, both financially and environmentally. The Dutch took another path: building roads where roads were needed, but progressively reprioritising their towns and cities towards the needs of pedestrians and people on bikes.

The UK stands at a crossroads. We can continue to invest massively in roads and gain a short term boost from lowered congestion. However, it is already well understood that building more roads ultimately creates more traffic, and with more traffic comes pollution, carbon emissions, urban sprawl, casualties and an increasingly sedentary and unhealthy population. Alternatively, we can take the path the Dutch chose and invest in cycling instead of - or as part of - conventional road investment. As with roads, building more cycle tracks generates more cycle journeys. But in contrast with motorised traffic, this brings only benefits: quieter cities, cuts in emissions, reduced social exclusion, and a healthier, potentially happier, population.



It seems obvious to us which investment produces greater returns – without coming at the expense of drivers. Transferring just 10% of short trips from car to bicycle can cut journey times for cars by up to a fifth. Congestion would be eased, even if road space was taken from cars.

We urge that when you consider investment in transport infrastructure, all modes – including bikes – are given serious consideration. We suggest you look at the research which shows that of all areas of infrastructure investment, active travel produces the greatest return in terms both of the economy and people's quality of life. And we ask you to take your colleagues on a study tour of the Netherlands to show them what a world-class cycling network looks like. You have the opportunity to transform the UK and leave a real legacy that would benefit the country for generations to come. We urge you to seize it now.

Yours sincerely,

Jim Davis
Chair, Cycling Embassy of Great Britain

Web: www.cycling-embassy.org.uk
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