

## **Crime and Disorder Audit 1999/2001**

### **Response by the London Cycling Campaign in Hackney (membership 550)**

We welcome the opportunity to respond to this Audit, and would like to comment on the following issues in relation to crime reduction in Hackney:

- Road safety and enforcement of road traffic offences, including speeding, careless and dangerous driving, parking and cycling on pavements
- Cycle theft
- Violence against cyclists
- Policing by bicycle

#### **1. ROAD SAFETY**

##### **1.1 Road safety as a Crime and Disorder issue**

At the time of the first Crime and Disorder Reviews in 1999, both the then Home Office Minister Alun Michael and the Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Paul Manning encouraged local police-borough partnerships to include the issue of road safety. We congratulate Hackney for being one of only four London boroughs to include road safety in its original Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy.

We believe that road safety is an issue of serious concern. Last year 284 people died in road collisions in London [1]. The number of road deaths in Hackney went up from four to nine between 1999 and 2000 [1]. In Great Britain as a whole, 38,155 people suffered serious injuries and 278,719 suffered minor injuries as a result of collisions on the roads in 2000 [2].

The government Road Safety Strategy [3], Home Office [4], Association of Chief Police Officers [5], Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary [6] and the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety [7] all call for greater action in policing the roads and reducing the number of casualties.

The government's Road Safety Strategy specifically mentions the Crime and Disorder Act as a means of tackling road safety through local public-police partnerships.

The ACPO road policing strategy recognises the link between road traffic offences and other criminal acts, including vehicle theft.

##### **1.2 Casualties**

The government's road safety strategy *Tomorrow's roads: safer for everyone* [3] calls for a reduction in casualties to be achieved by 2010. Some progress has been made in Great Britain as a whole, however in London the trend has been in the opposite direction.

The number of people killed on London's roads rose last year by 6% from 1999 and a 19% jump from 1998. The increase in the London figures for deaths and serious injuries are in contrast to the 2% fall in the national figures last year and a 2% fall the year before [1].

Major causes of road casualties in London are drink driving, speeding and careless or dangerous driving. Cyclists and other vulnerable road users are at risk disproportionately to

the number of person-kilometres travelled. We would like to see greater enforcement of the law leading to a reduction in road casualties.

### **1.3 Traffic policing**

We have obtained the following figures from the Metropolitan Police Authority [8]:

1980 Traffic police 1064, which was 4.48% of the total strength of the Met.  
1991 Traffic police 961 and 3.37% of total strength  
1999 Traffic police 823 and 3.15%  
2001 (31/03/01) Traffic police 646, 2.53% of total (post boundary changes)

We believe that this reduction in the number and percentage of traffic police has been a contributing factor in the increase in casualties in London. We would like to see the trend reversed and more police assigned to traffic duties.

### **1.4 Speeding**

We mention speeding as a special case because of the impact it has on the number of casualties and the severity of injuries. Speeding is a cause for concern on all of Hackney's major roads and one-way systems, for example Kingsland Road, Mare Street, Rectory Road and Shoreditch Triangle.

The latest Road Accident Statistics report [2] states that there is an established relationship between reducing speed and reducing collisions, following research by the Transport Research Laboratory [9] which showed that a 1mph reduction in speed reduces collisions by 5%.

We would like more cameras installed and used on Hackney's major roads. We would also like to see lower speed limits, home zones and other traffic calming measures on Hackney's residential roads.

### **1.5 Fear of road crime**

Hackney's Crime and Disorder Audit 1999/2001 recognises that fear of crime is itself a serious issue.

Cyclists in Hackney frequently have to take emergency action to avoid potentially harmful incidents caused by careless or dangerous driving. Some examples are: motor vehicles jumping red lights at junctions, turning left directly across the path of a cyclist without signalling, and changing lanes suddenly into the path of a cyclist. None of these incidents is reported to the police because (a) the vehicle is moving too fast to be identified, or (b) there is a lack of witnesses.

Danger is one of the main reasons why people in Hackney say that they are unwilling to cycle. We believe that the number of collisions would be much higher except that:

- 'avoiding action' taken by cyclists keeps the casualty figures low;
- only the 'hardy and experienced few' cycle, while new and inexperienced cyclists are frightened off the roads.

The amount of pedal cycle traffic has decreased year on year nationally [2]. We will be unable to persuade people out of their cars and back onto bicycles unless fear of driver crime is reduced. Better enforcement and a campaign of public awareness are required to make the roads feel safer.

## **1.6 Parking offences, abandoned vehicles, cars using the Narrow Way**

Cyclists are particularly vulnerable to obstruction and danger caused by illegal parking, since they generally occupy the space between moving motor traffic and the kerb, close to parked vehicles. Examples include double parking, parking in bike lanes, bus lanes and on red routes, and blocking cycle routes. Abandoned vehicles, and car drivers illegally using the Narrow Way also present a hazard. We are particularly keen to see these problems addressed.

## **1.7 Cycling on pavements**

Our group does not condone pavement cycling, and we would like to see a reduction in cycling on pavements through (a) making the roads safer for cyclists, (b) introducing contraflows on one-way streets or returning one-way streets to two-way traffic, (c) public awareness campaigns, in addition to (d) enforcement of the fine for this offence.

## **1.8 Borough Road Safety Plan**

We understand that our comments on road safety may be redirected towards the borough's Road Safety Plan. However, the current plan (2000/2001) deals almost exclusively with engineering responses to road safety in Hackney. The plan does not address driver behaviour or driver crime i.e. intentional breaking of the law.

We believe that engineering solutions need to go hand in hand with more effective enforcement of the law and better driver education, and for that reason we urge that road safety continues to be included in the Crime and Disorder Strategy.

## **2. CYCLE THEFT**

Cycle theft is a continuing problem in Hackney, and a considerable disincentive to cycling as a means of transport. We would welcome action by the council and police to reduce cycle theft by providing:

- More cycle parking facilities in Hackney
- Well lit and well situated cycle parking at all public buildings
- Information leaflets in cycle shops and schools
- Tagging and postcode stamping of bikes
- A public 'lost and found' register
- Checks on second hand dealers

The council still has in storage a number of parking stands which were commissioned and paid for by Groundwork Hackney on the understanding that the Council would install them, and which the council has failed to install.

## **3. VIOLENCE AGAINST CYCLISTS**

One of our members was recently assaulted by a car driver who also caused £200 worth of damage to his bicycle. Police refused to act against the driver and our member is forced to consider a private action. In our view this typifies the police failure to take driver crime seriously.

## **4. POLICING BY BICYCLE**

LB Camden has been running a six month pilot study with 8 cycles used by police for certain duties. The reported benefits from this scheme include:

- quicker response times
- being much nearer to the local community and far more accessible
- keeping the police fit and healthy
- reducing the use of police cars
- helping catch cyclists who cycle dangerously on pavements

A similar scheme in Hackney would be welcomed by the London Cycling Campaign in Hackney.

### **Summary of our response to Hackney's Crime and Disorder Audit**

- We are very concerned that the issue of road safety and driver crime does not appear in Hackney's Crime and Disorder Audit 1999/2001 and we urge its re-inclusion as a major issue in the Strategy for 2001/2005.
- We would like to see an increase in road traffic policing and enforcement.
- We would like to see action taken to change the public perception of speeding and careless / dangerous driving, via advertising, public awareness campaigns and driver retesting schemes, similar to the drink driving campaign of the last ten years.
- We welcome the increased use of speed cameras on the roads and fully support the government and the police on this issue.
- We would like greater attention paid towards preventing cycle theft.
- We recommend a pilot project for police officers to use cycles for certain duties.
- We strongly object to any references to 'vehicle crime' in the Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy which do not include road traffic offences. If the issue being described is 'vehicle-related theft' then that term should be substituted for 'vehicle crime'.

### Notes

1. Metropolitan Police Authority, figures provided by MPS to Jenny Jones (MPA)
2. DTLR *Road Accidents Great Britain 2000: the casualty report* Stationery Office (2001)
3. DETR *Tomorrow's roads: safer for everyone, The Government's road safety strategy and casualty reduction targets for 2010* (March 2000)
4. Home Office/ DETR *Road Traffic Penalties: A Consultation Paper* (December 2000)
5. Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) *National road policing strategy* (1997)
6. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) *Policing and Traffic* (1998)
7. Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety (PACTS) *Road traffic law and enforcement: a driving force for casualty reduction*, (July 1999)

8. MPS answers to questions raised by Jenny Jones at the MPA meeting on 10th May 2001, report signed by Deputy Commissioner, Ian Blair.
9. Finch D J, Kompfner P, Lockwood C R and Maycock G (1994). *Speed, Speed Limits and Accidents*. Project Report 58, Transport Research Laboratory (TRL), Crowthorne, and Taylor MC, Lynam DA and Baruya A (2000). *The effects of drivers' speed on the frequency of road accidents*. Report 421, TRL, Crowthorne.