

Cycling may be cheap, healthy and convenient but Britain's riders are paying with their lives when they take to the roads. The Times today launches a campaign for change



42% of people in Britain own a bicycle
3.1bn miles cycled in Britain in 2010
111 cyclists were killed on Britain's roads in 2010, up 7% on 2009

26% of cycle deaths involve a lorry or a van
2,660 cyclists were seriously injured in 2010
3 times more likely to be killed

cycling in Britain compared with cycling in the Netherlands
87% of respondents to a British Cycling survey said they had had an accident or near miss
16 miles average distance travelled by regular cyclists in Britain each week

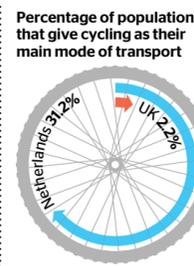
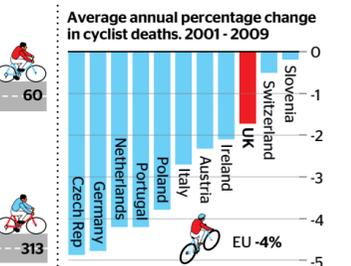
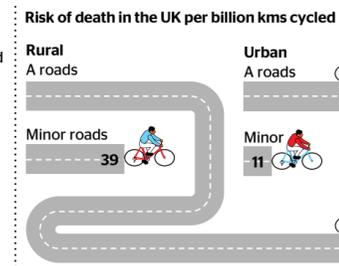
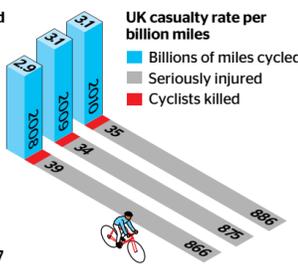


Table: Number of cyclists killed or injured per 100 million kms by country. Netherlands: 1.1 killed, 16 injured. Denmark: 1.6, 15. Germany: 1.6, 47. UK: 3.3, 57.



Source: European Commission, John Pucher and Ralph Buehler, 2008, European Transport Safety Council

On the road to more agony and regret . . . if we don't act now

Philip Pank Transport Correspondent

Britain risks a third annual rise in the number of cyclists killed or seriously injured on the roads.

Analysis conducted after a Times reporter, Mary Bowers, was crushed by a lorry on her ride to work shows that twice as many cyclists have been killed in the past decade as the number of British soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

But the rising toll masks an even more troubling trend for the people turning to cycling as a healthy, cheap and flexible mode of transport and the politicians whose policies are supposed to protect them: the rate of cyclists killed or seriously injured measured as a proportion of distance travelled rose in 2009 and 2010, the most recent years for which data exist. The rate rose to 886 per billion vehicle miles in 2010 from 875 in 2009 and 866 in 2008. This calls into question official assurances that it is getting safer to cycle.

The initial signs are that last year was little better. In the first two quarters of 2011 the number of cyclists killed or seriously injured also rose (by 10 per cent and 8 per cent respectively), while casualties among drivers, pedestrians and motorcyclists fell. Data for the third quarter are due out today.

A cyclist in Britain is three times more likely to be killed than one in the Netherlands and twice as likely as a cyclist in Denmark or Germany.

Road safety professionals, cycling groups and motoring organisations join The Times today in urging the Government to take practical steps to reverse this increase, to protect the lives of vulnerable road users and to build cities that are fit for cycling. The subject will be highlighted this spring as candidates set out their policies for mayoral elections in London.

Data for the capital released last week show that the rate of casualties among cyclists rose in 2008, 2009 and 2010. Questions over the "Cycle Revolution" of Boris Johnson, the Mayor of London, have been raised after 16 cyclists were killed last year.

Jenny Jones, the Green Party's mayoral candidate, said: "The truth is uncomfortable for all of us who want London to be a cycling-friendly city. The mayor has failed to make roads safer for vulnerable road users and he is fast becoming the big barrier to the future expansion of cycling in London."

Mr Johnson denies the claim and rightly points out that the rate of cyclists killed or seriously injured is falling in London. He agreed to review all main road junctions after a spate of fatalities last year. However, fear may yet thwart plans to encourage cycling. As one Whitehall source put it: "One of the reasons we have had quite good results on cycle safety is because people are too scared to get on their bikes."



Ghost bikes: makeshift memorials to cyclists killed on Britain's streets

said Robert Gifford, the executive director of the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety. "If the success of people like Mark Cavendish at the Olympics causes people to get on their bikes, it is important that they get ahead of the curve on this."

He said that two years of rising fatalities among motorcyclists a decade ago spurred the Government into action to reverse the increase.

Chris Peck, policy co-ordinator at the CTC cyclists' organisation, said: "We do know that this Government has done things that are completely unprogressive on road safety. We are really cutting back on the gold-plating for mayoral elections in London."

Online today

Support the campaign
Read the 8-point manifesto for safer cycling in cities
Tell us your cycling experiences
Contact your MP directly with your concerns
Spread the word by tweeting with the #cyclesafe hashtag
thetimes.co.uk/citiesfitforcycling



THE TIMES

A new covenant for cycling

Cycling on the urban roads of Britain should be a safe and pleasurable experience. Ministers, mayors and local authorities need to build cities that are fit for the purpose. These are the eight key requirements



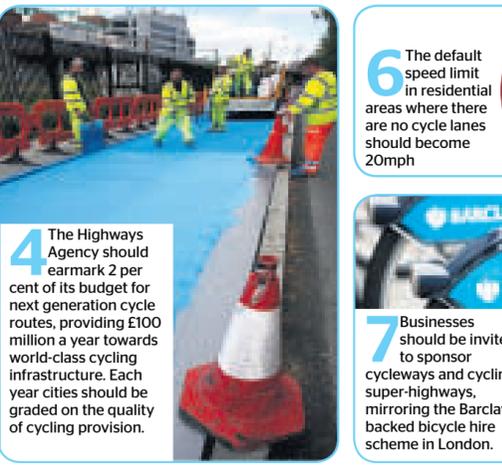
1 Trucks entering a city centre should be required by law to fit sensors, audible truck-turning alarms, extra mirrors and safety bars to stop cyclists being thrown under wheels.



2 The 500 most dangerous road junctions must be identified, redesigned or fitted with priority traffic lights for cyclists and Trixi mirrors that allow lorry drivers to see cyclists on their near-side.



3 A national audit of cycling to find out how many people cycle in Britain and how cyclists are killed or injured should be held to underpin effective cycle safety.



4 The Highways Agency should earmark 2 per cent of its budget for next generation cycle routes, providing £100 million a year towards world-class cycling infrastructure. Each year cities should be graded on the quality of cycling provision.



5 The training of cyclists and drivers must improve and cycle safety should become a core part of the driving test.



6 The default speed limit in residential areas where there are no cycle lanes should become 20mph
7 Businesses should be invited to sponsor cycleways and cycling super-highways, mirroring the Barclays-backed bicycle hire scheme in London.
8 Every city, even those without an elected mayor, should appoint a cycling commissioner to push home reforms

It's great to see so many riders, but safety must prevail

Nicole Cooke Olympic champion

Whenever I go to London these days I'm really impressed with the number of cyclists I see on the road, and particularly the variety of people who are cycling. You see businessmen commuting into the City or going to meetings on those Barclays hire bikes, couriers and wannabes with their fixed-gear bikes, and all types of people in between on all types of cycles. I've always loved cycling and I love seeing other people enjoy it, whether that's as sport, just a bit of fun or an efficient way of getting around. What I do worry about is that in the past year we've had more accidents in London than we should have where cyclists have been killed or badly injured. It's important that

we keep things in perspective because, overall, cycling is becoming safer, but that doesn't help the people involved in accidents and their families and friends. With the general build-up of interest in cycling and the effect of London 2012 encouraging more people on to their bikes, we need to do all we can to improve the safety of cyclists, especially those who are less experienced. Most of the serious accidents in London last year involved HGVs, so we need to look at the size of lorries that are



allowed into the city, the way they are set up for seeing cyclists in terms of mirrors, for example, and the way HGV drivers are trained. There are also junctions in London that need sorting out to make cyclists less vulnerable. I certainly wouldn't fancy riding across Vauxhall Cross or Elephant and Castle in rush hour, and those are only two examples. If we want more people to ride their bikes, we can't have parts of the city where cyclists feel like they are taking a big risk just crossing a junction — it just shouldn't be

that way. British Cycling recently courted the views of its members (I'm one), and the thing that most people thought would improve cyclists' safety was getting more mutual respect between riders and other road users. That's spot on, and we shouldn't forget that most riders are also drivers and, as more people cycle, the chances are that the guys or girls in their cars also have a bike. Lots of good work has been done in London to encourage cycling, but we must keep going so we encourage more people on to their bikes by creating a safe and respectful environment. It is election time in London so it would be good to hear all of the mayoral candidates respond to this message and understand how they are going to make life better for the cycling community.

'A tiny mistake can cost a life'

Behind the story London Air Ambulance

In his work with the air ambulance and as a trauma surgeon in the capital, Major Thomas König has witnessed enough serious injuries sustained by cyclists to convince him that they need far greater protection (Kaya Burgess writes). "I'm beginning to feel more and more that something needs to be done," he said. "Cycle safety can be seen as a political hot potato, but we clinicians are the ones seeing injured cyclists on a day-to-day basis. If this was an infectious disease and we sat by and did nothing about the casualty toll, we would be taken to task. "You see a whole scope of cycling injuries, from grazes to people whose lower limbs have been run over or who end up in hospital for two or three months with a broken pelvis. But with some injuries, such as when a lorry has just turned across a cyclist and driven straight over their pelvis or chest, the cyclist will still be conscious and be slowly dying in front of you. "You do your absolute best to get them to a place of safety as quickly as possible, but you are fighting a battle from the get-go and everyone involved has to be on the top of

their game to save that person's life. And even if you do, there is such a long road of complex surgery and teaching them to walk and speak again and knowing they may never go back to work." The wife of one of Major König's colleagues was one of those who treated the Times reporter Mary Bowers at the scene of her accident in November and is one of the people to whom she owes her life. "Working with the air ambulance," Major König said, "we deal with falls from height, shootings and stabbings, high-speed motor crashes, and can bypass local hospitals to get them into a major trauma centre. With most of those injuries, it's a young man's game — it tends to be young men who drive too fast, drink too much and get into fights. But with cycling injuries, it's everyone, both young and old, male and female. "As a trauma surgeon — and as a cyclist — I can see that asking cyclists to share the Embankment with heavy goods vehicles on a cold, rainy night is going to end in horrible mistakes. London is a city where one tiny mistake as a cyclist can cost you your life because cyclists are given so little room."

Save our cyclists: the accident behind the Times campaign

Continued from page 1 possible for it to happen. Mary's nurses said to me that, if I'd seen what they see all the time in intensive care, I would never cycle again. It is just so random and cruel, but it feels like so many of these things can be prevented by increasing awareness and changing road structures. "Mary is such a loving person and a real people-person, which attracts so many people to her and is why so many people she had come to know around the world are concerned about the tragedy and horror of what happened." There are many families who are not able to visit their relatives in hospital, because they did not survive. Debbie Dorling's husband, Brian, was killed in October last year on his way to work. "My husband had a human right to cycle to work and come back home again alive," she said. As a point of comparison: since 2001, 576 British soldiers have been killed in Afghanistan and Iraq; 1,275 cyclists have died on British streets. The latest data show there were 1,850 deaths or serious injuries in the first half of last year, a 12 per cent rise on the year before. Britain leads the world in competitive cycling: it is time that we did the same for the cyclists on our streets. Drivers and cyclists need to realise that co-existing safely benefits everyone, in terms of public health, traffic, pollution, and congestion on our roads, trains and buses. The Times is launching a cycle safety campaign not simply to call for safer roads, but to outline exactly how that can be achieved, in a way that will hold transport authorities and politicians to account. Too many cyclists have died on the streets of Britain. Too many families have lost their sons, daughters, fathers, mothers, husbands and wives. It is time for that to change. Tomorrow How an inner city can be cycle-friendly, plus one mother's fight against the lorries