

## **Hackney Crime and Disorder and Substance Misuse Audit 2001/2004**

Response by the London Cycling Campaign in Hackney

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### **Foreword**

With over 850 members in the borough, the London Cycling Campaign in Hackney is the largest local group of the 9,000-member London Cycling Campaign, the largest urban cycling organisation in the world. LCCiH seeks to represent the interests of all who use this mode of transport in the borough, and to campaign for their safety from crime and disorder (e.g., anti-social behaviour).

We welcome the opportunity to respond to this important Audit. This response is based on our response to Hackney's Crime and Disorder Audit in 2001. We note that the recommendations of our earlier response do not appear to form a significant part of the present Audit. In the following, we therefore set out why we disagree with the current priority assignment in the Audit.

### **Introduction**

The public highway forms a large part of the public realm in which crimes, disorder, and anti-social behaviour occur. Criminal and otherwise illegal behaviour by road users is a routine occurrence. It is therefore very important to tackle this problem as part of an integrated strategy to address crime and disorder—for instance, it is estimated that three quarters of disqualified drivers have criminal records. There therefore exists cross-cutting potential to maximise the efficiency of scarce resources by enforcing crime and disorder on the public highway.

We believe that this potential more than justifies considering such enforcement as a priority of Hackney's strategic approach to crime and disorder. This response is in lieu of answers to Hackney's Crime and Disorder questionnaire, and the greatest part is taken up by a comprehensive answer to Questions 2a and 4. In answer to Question 1, we are a voluntary and community organisation, and as previously stated, we do not fully agree with the priorities identified in Question 2. While these are all important topics, there is a lack of awareness of the benefits of the kinds of enforcement we discuss below.

As we disagree with the order of priorities in the Audit, we cannot answer Question 3, but we can identify the following three topics as the areas which give us the greatest cause for concern through their non-inclusion:

- ◆ Road user crime (e.g., road traffic offences, including speeding, careless and dangerous driving, and illegal parking);
- ◆ cycle theft;
- ◆ and violence against cyclists.

In the following, we explain in more detail our reasons why we consider these important.

## **1. CRIMINAL AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR BY ROAD USERS**

### **1.1 Road danger reduction as a Crime and Disorder issue**

We are disappointed to see that road danger reduction does not feature in Hackney's current Crime and Disorder strategy at all.

We believe that road danger reduction is an issue that urgently needs to be tackled. Every year, around 250-300 people die in road collisions in London. In 2003, there were four fatal and 142 serious road casualties in Hackney. Had these been as the result of robberies or gang wars, they would have made front-page headlines. As it is, they barely got a mention at all except for the odd report.

However, many of them are caused by criminal or otherwise illegal behaviour. Driving at excessive speeds is certainly anti-social behaviour; contraventions of the Highway Code cause upset and disorder; and criminals are helped in their illicit activities by the anonymity provided by the lack of enforcement on the public highway.

Greater action in policing the roads and reducing the number of casualties is called for by the following agencies: 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].

**We call on the Council to not only pursue traditional Road Safety measures, but to additionally adopt the Road Danger Reduction Forum's Road Danger Reduction Charter (see Appendix A).**

### **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.

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**

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.

A recent pilot project in LB Havering saw a mere two police officers assigned to traffic policing achieve considerable policing success not only in enforcement of road traffic legislation, but also in assisting their colleagues by recovering weapons, drugs, and stolen goods from illegally-driven vehicles as well as helping in the arrest of wanted individuals.

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)

There was a further reduction in 2002 (albeit temporary, cp. [8]).

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. Note also again the extract from the Appendix B, which recommends more enforcement by dedicated traffic police rather than cameras.

**Hackney Council must recommend that Hackney police assign dedicated officers to traffic policing 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, and Rectory Road. However, even fairly minor residential roads are continually subjected to illegal speeding.

The 2000 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. (It must be borne in mind, however, that camera enforcement will often be much less effective than direct enforcement by officers.) 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.

Perceived danger is one of the main reasons why people in Hackney say that they are unwilling to cycle. This perception arises in large part from anti-social and illegal driving. There is a considerable level of under-reporting of incidents like motor vehicles jumping red lights at junctions, passing a cyclist too closely and at excessive speed, turning left directly across the path of a cyclist without signalling, or changing lanes suddenly into the path of a cyclist. Vehicles often move too fast to be identified, or there is a lack of witnesses.

This is a major block to achieving public health objectives which are significantly assisted by the lower pollution, road danger, less noise, and more exercise that come with greater levels of cycling. Better enforcement and a campaign of public awareness are required to make the roads feel safer. Achieving and enabling such benefits must be one of the main objectives of enforcement.

#### **1.6 Decriminalised enforcement (parking offences, abandoned vehicles, cars using the Narrowway)**

Many previously criminal offences have been decriminalised, enabling the local authority to carry out enforcement action.

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 and cycle gaps. Abandoned vehicles, and car drivers illegally using the Narrowway also present a hazard. We are particularly keen to see these problems addressed.

In addition to more enforcement by traffic police, the local authority must urgently begin using its new powers under the Traffic Management Act 2004 to use camera enforcement of speeding, especially for 20mph zones. We were pleased to hear from the Head of Parking recently that enforcement under the TMA is already taking place for parking.

**It is very important that Hackney introduce more Residents' Priority Parking Schemes, as well as 20mph zones to cover the entire borough. Such zones have been shown to be very effective in reducing anti-social behaviour by road users.**

### **1.7 Highway Code violations by pedal cyclists**

Our group does not condone violations of the Highway Code by cyclists any more than those by drivers of motor vehicles or other road users, and we would like to see a reduction in these offences through (a) making the roads safer for cyclists, (b) returning one-way streets to two-way traffic or introducing contraflows on one-way streets, and (c) public awareness campaigns, in addition to (d) enforcement of the fine for such offences.

Priority, however, must be given to enforcing Highway Code violations by drivers of motor vehicles, owing to the vastly greater danger caused by them. In 2003, for instance, drivers of motor vehicles were involved in 98.9% of pedestrian casualties in London, compared to pedal cyclists in 1.1% of such casualties [1].

### **1.8 'Soft' vs. 'hard' measures towards road danger reduction**

It is vital to understand that road danger is mainly a cause of driver behaviour. However, responses to road danger typically take the form of 'self-enforcing' 'hard measures' of highway engineering in London, owing to the lack of active enforcement

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 danger reduction be included in the Crime and Disorder Strategy.

## **2. CYCLE THEFT**

Cycle theft, including cycle theft from inside or near the home, 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 (residential, workplace, on-street, etc.)
- ◆ Well-lit and well situated cycle parking at all public buildings
- ◆ Information leaflets in cycle shops and schools
- ◆ More funding for Crime Prevention work, e.g. for anti-theft tagging of bikes
- ◆ Working together with LB Tower Hamlets to stop re-sale of stolen bikes at Brick Lane market
- ◆ Checks on second hand dealers

Cycle theft is a form of property crime and therefore implicitly included in Priority 1. However, like Vehicle Crime it requires a separate category in the Audit, and existing levels of under-reporting must be addressed. We estimate that the value of stolen bicycles is at least half a million pounds a year. Also, it must be recognised that there are proactive policing strategies that can be deployed to tackle the problem, e.g. stepping up crime prevention measures, and targeted investigations into the activities of criminal gangs dedicated to cycle theft.

**Cycling is Hackney's fastest-growing mode of transport, and cycle theft must be included as a separate category in the Crime and Disorder audit from now on, and action must be taken to reduce levels of under-reporting.**

### **3. VIOLENCE AGAINST CYCLISTS**

We are aware of unacceptably high rates of assaults against cyclists in De Beauvoir and Dalston. There seems to be a particular targeting of cycling as a mode. It is clearly often known to attackers that cyclists may carry valuable items like laptops in their panniers.

There needs to be pro-active policing of Hackney's much-used cycle routes. Gangs of young people have ambushed cyclists around the Hackney/Islington border and in London Fields, snatching panniers and cycles, as well as often causing injury, up to and including grievous bodily harm. Incidents have been reported of objects being thrown at cyclists and metal bars have been used in attacks (e.g., in Whiston Road).

All these incidents have contributed to a rise in the level of perceived danger, so that in any publicity associated with personal security, it is important that it also mention that cycling is still relatively safe in comparison with journeys undertaken as a combination of walking and public transport.

There are often incidents in which drivers of motorised vehicles take offensive action against pedal cyclists. Assaults by motor vehicle are just as serious as those carried out in other ways. Traffic policing is essential to prevent such incidents from taking place, as they arise in large part out of the culture of speeding and less regard than necessary for non-motorised traffic.

While motor vehicles are often used as offensive weapons, at a less perceptible level they are also used for intimidatory driving. In this instance, enforcement would have to be more concerned with speeding and close passing, for instance.

**In summary, anti-social behaviour by road users must have a priority spot in the Crime and Disorder Strategy.**

### **4. POLICING BY CYCLE**

We are delighted that Hackney Borough Police have set up a dedicated anti-robbery unit, in which most of the work is done by officers on bicycles, in the south of the borough. We have written to the Borough Commander, Chief Supt Pountain, to congratulate the police on this excellent initiative. The reported benefits of cycle use 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

We were also delighted to hear from Chief Supt Pountain that the new neighbourhood teams will carry out policing duties by bicycle (e-mail communication of 22/11/04).

We note that the present unit, whose members have been in attendance at two of our recent meetings, have as their main remit robbery and street crime. If their numbers were increased, they could also contribute to addressing the issues of speeding, driver crime, etc., as addressed above.

Such issues are undoubtedly among the 'everyday crimes' that together contribute to a very considerable reduction in the quality of the public realm. The Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone has repeatedly emphasised that it is 'low level' crime that contributes very strongly to a lack of ownership of the public realm, and this recognition must be extended to all those areas of road user crime which cycle-using police are ideally suited to observe (owing to the greater awareness of surroundings enjoyed by pedal cyclists).

We are also very keen for a cycle squad to be established in the north of the borough.

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

- ◆ We are very concerned that the issues of road user crime and road danger reduction do not appear in Hackney's Crime and Disorder Audit 2001/2004 and we urge its inclusion.
- ◆ We would like to see a marked increase in road traffic policing and enforcement.
- ◆ Cycling is Hackney's fastest-growing mode of transport, and cycle theft must be included as a separate category in the Crime and Disorder audit from now on, and action must be taken to reduce levels of under-reporting.
- ◆ 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, or the recent road safety campaign addressing the lack of seat belt wearing.
- ◆ We welcome the increased use of speed cameras on the roads and fully support the government and the police on this issue. Hackney must now use its new powers under the TMA 2004.
- ◆ We would like greater attention paid towards preventing cycle theft.
- ◆ We recommend a large increase in the number of police officers using pedal cycles for certain duties, in particular for a new cycle squad to be based in the north of the borough.
- ◆ 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. Transport for London (London Road Safety Unit) (July 2004). *Accidents and casualties on London's roads 2003*.

[http://www.tfl.gov.uk/streets/downloads/pdf/LRSR/Annual\\_Reports/Accidents\\_casualtiesonLondonsroads2003Jul04.pdf](http://www.tfl.gov.uk/streets/downloads/pdf/LRSR/Annual_Reports/Accidents_casualtiesonLondonsroads2003Jul04.pdf)

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. *Ninth Report of the Select Committee on Transport, Local Government and the Regions* (section referred to reproduced in Appendix B below)

<http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200102/cmselect/cmtlgr/557/55708.htm>

## Appendix A: Road Danger Reduction Charter

Signatories of the Charter pledge to:

1. Seek a genuine reduction in danger for all road users by identifying and controlling the principal sources of threat.
2. Find new measures to define the level of danger on our roads. These would more accurately monitor the use of and threat to benign modes.
3. Discourage the unnecessary use of private motor transport where alternative benign modes or public transport are equally or more viable.
4. Pursue a transport strategy for environmentally sustainable travel based on developing efficient, integrated public transport systems. This would recognise that current levels of motor traffic should not be increased.
5. Actively promote cycling and walking, which pose little threat to other road users, by taking positive and co-ordinated action to increase the safety and mobility of these benign modes.
6. Promote the adoption of this charter as the basis of both national and international transport policy.

<http://www.hackney-cyclists.org.uk/charter.htm>

## Appendix B

From: Select Committee on Transport, Local Government and the Regions Ninth Report

### TRAFFIC POLICE

62. In recent years there has been a significant reduction in the numbers of traffic police. ACPO noted that "traffic police numbers (as defined by HMIC) appear to have dropped by some 11%" between 1996-7 and 200-01. The national changes mask very differing pictures in different authorities. In some areas, the reduction in police numbers has been much more than 11%: the Metropolitan Police had 921.9 traffic police in 1996-7, but only 685.7 in 2000-01. This number was further, and severely reduced in 2002, albeit, we were assured, temporarily.

63. ACPO justified the fall on the grounds that the greater use of cameras compensated for the loss of police numbers, as the increasing number of speeding offences dealt with by the police showed. It admitted, however, that there was "a clear demand from the public ... to see more police officers out on public roads". This demand is not unreasonable. While cameras bring many benefits, they cannot do everything. They cannot be used to prevent inappropriate speed. They are of little use against the large number of unlicensed drivers in the country. Transport for London informed us that:

"A minority of drivers operate beyond the traffic regulations without being registered as the vehicle's owner, without tax or insurance and these drivers have a disproportionate number of crashes ... In London, the Havering road safety group instigated a survey in October. With the help of local police cadets they stopped and checked 157 vehicles (in four hours, over two days) and found 48 with no road fund licence".

There is now the technology to detect untaxed cars. In addition, in the future, Mr

Brunstrom, the Chief Constable of North Wales, suggested that it would be possible to ensure compliance through digital cameras which could recognise faces, but this has important civil liberties implications. For the present action against unlicensed drivers requires, first and foremost, traffic police who stop motorists. Safety cameras are of little use in catching or deterring drivers travelling at inappropriate speeds or unlicensed drivers. Moreover, cameras paid for under the scheme can only be used at severe accident blackspots. The Police must ensure that there are adequate numbers of traffic police to deter:

- inappropriate speed;
- unlicensed drivers; and
- drivers who speed at places away from the accident blackspots where camera will be located.

There should be no further reduction in the numbers of traffic police.

<http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200102/cmselect/cmtlgr/557/55708.htm>