



# Cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians:

measuring their satisfaction with  
Highways England's network

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# Foreword

*Cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians: a summary of priorities for Highways England's Network,<sup>1</sup> set out the key issues and barriers that these users face when travelling along or crossing strategic roads. Transport Focus wanted to further explore their experiences, as well as investigate the most appropriate ways to measure their satisfaction.*

**The key objectives of this research were to:**

- investigate the feasibility of undertaking further research into the experiences of cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians using Highways England's network
- explore the concerns of these users to assist in developing a tool for measuring their satisfaction
- examine the different approaches to collecting satisfaction data from cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians.

The research identified common themes between all three categories of road user, such as road suitability, general provision and drivers' behaviour. Some chose to avoid the network altogether due to the lack of an appropriate route to the places they wished to go. This led to situations where a strategic road limited people's mobility instead of facilitating it. We believe the greatest value to Highways England will come from understanding these local issues to target future upgrades of the network.

Cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians all have a degree of scepticism that Highways England adequately considers their needs during road design. The variations in infrastructure provision around the country strengthens their view that the network is not intended for them. It is important that Highways England recognises how accumulated experiences shape users' opinions over time.

Highways England's network is important to many cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians as it affects their everyday lives – it is important that their views are heard. This research indicates that a wider survey of satisfaction is feasible among this group of users, despite their relatively small number compared with drivers.



Transport Focus will therefore proceed with a pilot project to measure satisfaction among cyclists and pedestrians who use Highways England's roads, supplemented by a qualitative assessment of satisfaction among equestrians. We anticipate that this research will become an ongoing part of Transport Focus's suite of surveys which track satisfaction over time, and will complement our Strategic Roads User Survey (SRUS) among drivers.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research-publications/publications/cyclists-pedestrians-equestrians-summary-priorities-highways-englands-network/>

## Overview

Cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians don't consciously assess if the road or path they are using specifically meets their needs – mainly, they just use what's there. Where specific provision has been made, such as a pavement or cycleway, it is valued. A lack of provision, such as no suitable crossing point, can lead to a negative opinion of the network, and the perception that their needs are not considered in road design.

### Safety

Where cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians have to interact with the network, safety is a recurring concern. Safety, whether of those crossing the network or travelling along it, is of crucial importance. For cyclists, overbridges, controlled crossings and segregated lanes were rated highly where provided. However, negative experiences included poorly-designed infrastructure, such as cycle lanes that stop without warning or the complete absence of them on some Highways England 'A' roads.

### Usage

Our research indicated that five per cent of those who cycle regularly, and 14 per cent of those who walk, will go on, next to, or across motorways or major 'A' roads when they do these activities. Many equestrians are likely to avoid the Highways England network due to the speed and volume of traffic. However, some use is unavoidable – such as when following bridleways that are intersected by major 'A' roads.

### Footpaths

The lack of footpaths, especially in more rural areas, was a primary concern for pedestrians. This often forced them to walk in the carriageway or seek an alternative mode of transport, such as a car or bus. There was also a preference for more user-operated crossings near leisure, retail or business facilities. Additional safety concerns were raised about the use of underpasses and bridges, especially if poorly lit or in secluded areas. Cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians also sought clearer signs to warn drivers on the approach to locations where they may be crossing the carriageway.

Our case studies provide specific local examples of these issues, but highlight four common themes:

- 1 Infrastructure suitability:** a belief that the views of cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians are not taken into account when new sections of road are built, or older sections upgraded.
- 2 General provision:** inconsistent provision across the Highways England network with some areas more highly-rated than others.
- 3 Driver behaviour:** a call to better educate drivers about sharing road space, particularly when driving next to or overtaking cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians.
- 4 Consequences of severance:** often due to a lack of suitable crossing points and measures to 'join up' public rights of way. Where a strategic road divides a community, key facilities may become difficult to access without motorised transport.



# Case studies

## Dover

The A2 and A20 featured prominently in the experiences of cyclists and pedestrians as many come into contact with these roads as part of their everyday life. The Port of Dover sees an exceptionally large number of lorries pass through the area, complicating travelling along and crossing the network. Cyclists brought up the lack of dedicated provision on both roads and they felt recent upgrades to the A20 have not brought any significant improvements. The Whitfield roundabout featured heavily in users' experiences of crossing the A2. Issues included anxiety over using the underpass at night and concerns that, as the only dedicated crossing of the A2, it may become overcrowded or lead to anti-social behaviour if nearby new housing proposals proceed.

## Manchester

Because of population density in Greater Manchester, cyclists and pedestrians frequently cross and travel along Highways England roads. Pedestrians were largely happy with their experience (for example, bridges over the M60 were particularly well regarded), but noted drivers' behaviour (for example, not slowing down or stopping at crossings near the A5103/M56 junction) had a negative impact on their experience. Cyclists were concerned about driver behaviour, especially at junctions, as well as their vulnerability when there is no dedicated cycle lane.

## Worthing/Shoreham

Cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians reported their experiences of junctions on the A27 and 'severance' the road causes. Many need to cross this road to access facilities or the countryside. There were concerns over being able to travel safely along the A27 as well as a lack of suitable crossing points. Cyclists highlighted inconsistent provision of cycle lanes on sections of the A27, as well as driver behaviours such as disregarding signals at user-operated crossings and not giving enough space when overtaking.

## York

Most of the experiences of cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians focused on the A64, seen by many as a crucial but fast road. Experiences varied depending on which stretch of the A64 was being used. Crossing provision was inconsistent along the route (especially in more rural areas), and required pedestrians to walk along the main road to connect with other public rights of way. Experiences were generally positive about the footpaths and cycle

paths that do exist. Lack of crossings and segregated provision between Tadcaster and Leeds resulted in these users coming into direct conflict with motorised vehicles.

## Newcastle

The A1, A69 and A19 are seen as part of everyday life for cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians. Cyclists, and sometimes equestrians, use the A69 to access more rural areas but do not feel comfortable due to the speed of traffic. Better provision for cyclists on the A69 could mean that leisure cyclists ride all the way rather than start or finish their excursion by car. Lack of maintenance of verges and few suitable crossings in rural parts were highlighted as key areas of concern for pedestrians and equestrians. Closer to Newcastle, in a more urban environment, the provision of dedicated cycle lanes and crossings was seen as satisfactory.

### Method

#### Focus groups

- Ten focus groups were held with those using and crossing the Highways England network within the previous four weeks.
- Four focus groups were held with cyclists in Dover, Manchester, Shoreham and York. Four were held with pedestrians in Dover, Manchester, Worthing/Shoreham and Newcastle, and two groups were held with equestrians in York and Newcastle.

#### In-depth Interviews

- Five in-depth interviews (two with cyclists, two with pedestrians and one with equestrians) were conducted with those who used and crossed Highways England's network within the previous four weeks. These also included vox pops and accompanied site visits by the research team.
- A further eight in-depth interviews were conducted with cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians with those avoiding or experiencing severance caused by Highways England's network. These were conducted in Didcot, Lowestoft and Hastings.
- Transport Focus was supported by independent research agency Future Thinking. All fieldwork was conducted between 16-28 March 2017.

## Conclusions

- 1 Cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians don't consciously consider whether Highways England roads meet their needs.** While these users tend not to consciously consider what makes a 'good journey', when prompted they recall a wealth of positive and negative experiences about using these roads. This research has shown that the ability to safely use Highways England's network matters to cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians and can significantly impact on their daily lives. Most people we spoke to would prefer improvements to focus on ensuring the network is open to all types of user – but safely. Areas where they are at greater risk should be identified, and appropriate interventions made.
- 2 Cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians are willing to engage with further research, especially when focusing on a local context.** They are likely to participate in future research that explores their needs and satisfaction with Highways England's

network. Participation rates could be strengthened using a localised approach (as it helps these users to identify Highways England roads in their region), and by emerging evidence that their feedback influences change.

- 3 There are enough cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians impacted by Highways England's network to provide a robust measure of satisfaction.** Although cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians represent a small proportion of users of England's strategic roads, their views are as important as those of other users.

Our research has indicated that enough cyclists and pedestrians use Highways England's network to make a quantitative satisfaction survey feasible, even using a local area approach. Smaller numbers of equestrians mean that a quantitative measure is not feasible for this group, but their views can be gathered qualitatively.



## Next steps: pilot project

Transport Focus will carry out further work to understand cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians' satisfaction with the Highways England network. This will look at cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians who travel along the carriageway itself, and on pathways alongside the carriageway. We will also include users who have crossed over strategic roads, either at surface level or using an underpass or bridge.

In early 2018, the pilot survey will measure the level of satisfaction with journeys among cyclists and pedestrians in one or more geographic areas, as well as carry out qualitative research in those same areas. Qualitative research will also be carried out with equestrians. This approach will not produce a national figure of satisfaction but it will highlight where issues are encountered at a local level.

### Objectives:

- **To measure satisfaction** with journeys on Highways England roads made by cyclists and pedestrians
- **To assess satisfaction** among equestrians making journeys on Highways England's roads
- **To generate findings** for Highways England and others, to identify what measures should be taken to improve satisfaction in that area.

Following the pilot survey, we would look to develop a rolling programme of research covering each Highways England region every two or three years, tracking satisfaction.



### Method – how to survey cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians

Cyclists and pedestrians that have used the Highways England network in a specific geographic area will be invited to take part in an online survey. They will need to have used the network within the previous four weeks of the survey date to participate. The survey will take around 10-15 minutes to complete.

We will undertake qualitative research among equestrians to give an assessment of their satisfaction with journeys using Highways England roads.

We will carry out additional qualitative research among cyclists and pedestrians to enhance our understanding of what Highways England should do to increase their satisfaction.

We will share the survey results widely and anticipate that they will help Highways England to identify where there is good provision, as well as areas for improvements. We will publish the findings on our website.

## Contact Transport Focus

Any enquiries about this research should be addressed to:

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Transport Focus is the operating name of the Passengers' Council

**Transport Focus is the independent consumer organisation representing the interests of:**

- all users of England's motorways and major 'A' roads (the Strategic Road Network)
- rail passengers in Great Britain
- bus, coach and tram users across England outside London.

**We work to make a difference for all transport users**