

**When transport policy becomes health policy: A documentary analysis of
active travel policy in England**

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There has been a succession of policy documents related to active travel published by the British government since the implementation of a National Cycle Network (NCN) in 1995. However, as the latest National Travel Survey (NTS) reveals, the number of journeys made by bike in the UK has remained steadfastly around only 2% (Department for Transport [DfT], 2018a). By using documentary analysis of the available official policy documents and statements, the aim of this paper is to make sense of the policies that have been published concerning active travel (AT) in England. This is done from a figurational sociological perspective. Three key themes emerge from the analysis: (1) the rhetorical, advisory level of the vast majority of the policies; (2) the reliance on a wide network of local authorities to implement AT policy; and (3) the focus placed on individuals to change their behaviour.

Furthermore, the analysis reveals that despite a large number of policy publications from a range of government departments claiming to promote AT, little has actually changed in this time period in terms of a national agenda. Despite the successive policies, it seems there is little appetite on behalf of recent governments to make widespread infrastructural changes, where instead the focus has largely been on persuading the individual to seek more active modes of travel, increasingly for their own, individual 'health' gains.

Key words:

active travel, policy, cycling, walking, health, healthism, climate change, environment, figurational sociology

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1. Introduction

Despite the apparent success of implementing active travel (AT) policies within certain countries in continental Europe (see Pucher & Buehler, 2007 and Pucher & Buehler, 2008), and the considerable attention from successive British governments, there has been, it would seem, little national success in promoting AT in the United Kingdom (UK). Whilst London saw a rise in those cycling to work between the last two Census programmes (circa 2001 and 2011), cycling actually decreased in the majority (202/348) of English local authorities (LAs) (Office for National Statistics, 2014). Although there have been policy documents produced in this country that have sought to promote AT, and particularly cycling, since the 1970s, the establishment of the National Cycle Network (NCN) in 1995 and the subsequent government publication of a National Cycling Strategy the following year have been followed by regular government publications and policies that have sought to promote cycling as a method of transport. However, the formation and evaluation of cycling policy in Britain has received relatively little attention academically (Gaffron, 2005; MacMillen, Givoni, & Banister, 2010). This is with the notable exception of Aldred (2012), who aimed to place cycling policy “in the context of broader shifts in policy governance” (p. 95). No other papers have yet to examine this issue since, and there has yet to be an overtly theoretical analysis of AT policy. As such, by using documentary analysis, the aim of this paper is to examine the development of AT policy since 1995 from a figurational sociological perspective. Thus enabling us to appreciate the complexities of the AT policy process more in the round than has feasibly been the case in previous studies.

In the first instance, this paper offers a short précis of a figurational sociological perspective on policy per se. This is followed by a brief account of the methods. The paper will then examine, in greater detail, successive policies that have been introduced by various different governments since 1995.

2. Policy as a process

Whilst there have been numerous papers that have examined AT in England (and elsewhere) published already, a key feature of this paper is the particular sociological examination that is provided in order to understand the policy process more generally. Figurational sociology has yet to be used as a way of developing knowledge on transport policy processes, however there is a growing field of figurational analyses for studies on sport policy (e.g. Bloyce & Lovett, 2012; Bloyce & Smith, 2010; Stuij & Stokvis, 2015) and health policy (e.g. Henderson, Evans, Allen-Collinson, & Siriwardena, 2017). It is therefore argued that figurational sociology can help us more adequately understand the AT policy process. As Malcolm (2008, p. 261) has argued “the maturity of figurational sociology is now such that we can move away from extended theoretical re-statements and assume that such information is readily available elsewhere”. Nonetheless, it is worth offering a brief overview of the manner in which it might be employed to help explain the policy process more generally, before then seeking to apply it to an understanding of the development of AT policy specifically.

Placing human figurations at the centre of the analysis of the policy process helps to illustrate the ways in which these figurations enable and constrain the actions of the people involved. It also helps to point towards how policy processes can be seen as an expression of the differential constraints and unequal power relations between groups of people whose interests and perceptions are likely to be at variance with one another (Elias, 1978). Policies begin life as issues that develop over time. At different times, some groups are more able to take up interests in some developments whilst simultaneously ignoring others in order to sustain, protect and advance their own interests (Murphy, 1998). Whilst it is not possible within the confines of this paper to offer a fuller socio-historical analysis of the emergence and development of AT policies, it is, therefore, important to at least provide some detail of the changing emphasis on AT over time. As such, before the more detailed analysis of policies produced since 1995 is possible, it is important to highlight changing government policy toward AT before then. This is especially important because figurational sociologists also emphasize the tendency for policy-makers to ignore the significance of the long-term interweaving of planned and unplanned processes. The sheer complexity of the patterns of interaction, involving large

numbers of people all of whom have an interest in a particular policy area, inevitably give rise to unplanned outcomes. Those involved in the planning and implementation of policy, however, rarely reflect upon the possible side-effects of pursuing their favoured policy. This is primarily because they “are all too often involved in networks of relationships which constrain them to deliver results in the short-term” (Dopson & Waddington, 1996, p. 535).

The complexity of the policy process is exacerbated further by the “need to balance national and local interests, to integrate national, urban, and rural development” (Church, 2004, p. 555) in considering any type of policy that impacts on the cultural landscape of the environment – which, of course, the majority of policies regarding transport, and thus AT, undoubtedly do. As will become apparent, despite growing concern at the national level to promote AT, this has been met with quite disparate adoption at the local level. It provides a useful reminder of the need to take a more balanced consideration of power relationships within the policy process more generally. The government are not all-powerful and rely on local implementation of policies they establish. Furthermore, the government department responsible for transport in the UK, the Department for Transport (DfT)ⁱ, appears to sit in two camps; at times being seen to be sympathetic to those in support of AT, whilst always being constrained by those groups whose concern lies with increasing the provision for motorized transport. Therefore, in cases such as AT, where a number of different groups are involved in the policy process, some of whom may be in favour of AT policy objectives and some of whom may be opposed to any proposed changes, it is crucial to understand something of the complexity of the networks of relationships of which policy-makers are a part. As such, it is argued that policy tends to be a complex, often contradictory and, as a result, messy process lacking a convincing evidence-base. All policies tend to share several underpinning features. They entail, for example, human action aimed at achieving certain objectives, resolving, or at least ameliorating, an identified ‘problem’, as well as maintaining or modifying

ⁱ The government department responsible for transport in the UK has been through several variations in titles over the last 4 decades. For example, it has been called the Department of Transport (DoT) 1976-79; 1981-1997, the Ministry of Transport (MoT) between 1979-1981, the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) between 1997 and 2001, the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLGR) between 2001 and 2002, and the Department for Transport (DfT) since 2002.

relationships within or between organizations (Bloyce & Smith, 2010). Many of these underpinning features of the policy process can be seen within successive government policy towards AT.

3. Methods

Publicly available documents from government departments published between 1995, when the NCN was established, until the middle of 2018, were analysed. In order to ensure the authenticity and credibility of sources (Scott, 1990), the selection criteria were limited by analysing those documents available from each organization's website. The websites were searched using the following keywords: 'active travel', 'active transport', 'cycle', 'cyclists', 'cycling' and 'walking'. While most sources published since 1995 are available online, those archived or no longer available online may have been missed. As such, it is not claimed that this is a meta-analysis of the policy documents in this area, rather this is a theoretical analysis of the policy process. Furthermore, in order to limit the sample, the publications were then searched using the same keywords as well as reading the documents at least twice to identify all publications that included statements, comments or plans for AT. A total of 89 publications were included in the sample (a list of publishing organizations is provided in Table 1). Documents were analysed through coding emerging themes relating to AT policy. All publications were read and re-read in order to identify the emerging themes (Prior, 2003).

[Please insert Table 1 around here]

To provide some context of the policy landscape in the UK, 'transport' today is a partially devolved area of governance, as such, after various Acts of devolution, the Welsh Assembly, for example, have assumed full control over transport decisions in Wales, whereas the Scottish Parliament only has control over some transport decisions. Even within England, responsibility for transport is devolved to the Mayor's office within Greater London and Greater Manchester, whilst the majority of AT delivery outside of these regions is under the remit of LAs (Figure 1 demonstrates the ways in which AT provisions are funded and delivered in England; for a more detailed account of AT responsibilities in England see Hull [2008]). As a result, the specific focus within this paper is on national AT policy within England.

Since the NCN was established, there have been a considerable number of official publications and policies concerning cycling as a method of transport. Figure 2 provides a timeline of key government AT policy events since the establishment of the NCN. Despite the fact that there have been five different Prime Ministers in that time, each in charge of different governments with different ideologies and policies emerging therein, there are many similarities in terms of the policies produced. Indeed, one could be forgiven for thinking that AT policy is something akin to cycling in treacle. In other words, there has been a lot of words expended by the different governments, but the policy changes have not, in real terms, amounted to significant amounts of policy change. It is to a discussion of the three key areas that have been identified from the policy analysis that we will now turn. Whilst a number of sub-themes were identified, within the confines of this paper three core areas for analysis were established. These are (1) the rhetorical, advisory level of the vast majority of the policy; (2) the reliance on LAs and local business to implement AT policy; and (3) the focus placed on individuals to change their behaviour (in the sociology of health literature, this concept is referred to as healthism [Crawford, 1980]). However, it is important to recognize that, whilst for brevity's sake the areas are discussed discretely, the themes contain several overlapping issues and concerns.

[Insert Figure 1 around here]

[Insert Figure 2 around here]

4.1 Policy as rhetoric: Advisory level of the policy publications

Although this is far from unique to this particular area of policy, a key theme in the policies analysed for this paper is that they are characterized by their rhetorical and advisory nature. That is to say, whilst several policies have been produced by government departments or related non-departmental public bodies, they offer little more than guidance and advice to LAs, employers and individuals about how they might engage in regular AT. Successive governments, it seems, have been happy to pay lip service to the promotion of AT.

Having provided lottery funding in 1995 to develop existing local cycling routes to a network that extended through LAs right the way across the UK (the NCN), the

following year the government also published the National Cycling Strategy (NCS) (DoT, 1996). This was the first dedicated national policy for cycling in the UK. Despite some reticence in previous years, it was clear from this that the DoT (1996) now publicly supported the promotion of cycling. The NCS aimed at doubling the number of cycling trips by the end of 2002 before doubling them again by 2012. However, it was not actually stated what the baseline was, other than “cycling accounts for less than 2% of trips in the UK” (DoT, 1996, p. 12). Whatever the baseline was, however, the way in which the government proposed to meet their targets was a little vague.

Following the election of a Labour government, with Tony Blair as Prime Minister, in 1997, the newly named DETR (1998) published a White Paper in 1998, *A New Deal for Transport*, in which the government called for “greener, cleaner vehicles that have less impact on our environment” (p.12) alongside “better public transport” (p.12) and easier accessibility to walking and cycling. However, the lack of anything other than ‘advice’ was evident here too. Indeed, the DETR’s (1998, p. 33) stated aim for the policy was to “publish advice on good practice”. The White Paper did “endorse” (DETR, 1998, p.33) the national targets established in the NCS. Two years later, however, the DETR (2000a) argued for “a rebasing of the National Cycling Strategy target of quadrupling cycling trips by 2012 on a 1996 base” (p. 76), to instead “triple the number of cycling trips compared with a 2000 base” (p. 75) by 2010. No explanation was provided for why they were “rebasings” the targets and it was claimed that the original 2012 targets “will also be retained” (DETR, 2000a, p. 76). Evidently the lack of clearly articulated goals was a feature of AT policy. However, Elias’s work would suggest that vague intentions might limit a government’s ability to achieve their intended aims. For example, according to Dunning and Hughes (2012), “the more fantasy-laden the basis for... interventions, the more likely... interventions are to have a higher degree of unintended relative to intended consequence” (p. 47). With the government originally aiming to quadruple their cycling figures without any clear framework, figurational sociologists would suggest that unintended outcomes, or in this case, limited outcomes, were always likely. Indeed, Lumsdon and Tolley (2001) claimed that this lack of framework was perhaps the most prominent reason for the government’s failure to reach the targets of the NCS.

In June 2004, the DfT (2004a) published *Walking and Cycling. An Action Plan*. The Minister of State for Transport, Dr Kim Howells, noted in the foreword that “for walking and cycling, this action plan marks a beginning, rather than an end” (DfT, 2004a, p.3). This is actually a fairly standard phrase in many policy documents, and it provides a good illustration of a focus on “take offs, not on landings” (Weiss, 1993, p.99), insofar as it singularly failed to recognize the ‘beginnings’ already made in earlier documents. Perhaps unsurprisingly, therefore, it was acknowledged that despite some success within some LAs, and despite remaining “strongly committed to the overall goals” of the NCS “across England as a whole, we have not succeeded in raising cycling levels significantly above the 1996 baseline” (DfT, 2004a, p.7). Indeed, just the following month the DfT (2004b, p. 77) officially dropped the “‘one size fits all’ national target”. It was clear that the government remained committed, however, to the notion that local transport plans (LTPs) could provide the solution, despite the seeming weight of evidence against this. A local transport note was also produced by the DfT (2004c) that provided advice on the design and subsequent implementation of quality infrastructure improvements aimed at encouraging cycling. However, there was no requirement for LAs to put these in place. Instead, attention was focused on the need, wherever possible, to avoid shared-use with pedestrians and concentrate on modifying the highway to incorporate cycle lanes. In this respect, “local authorities reported that they delivered more than 6,000 kilometres of new cycle routes between 2001–02 and 2003–04” (DfT, 2004b, p. 77). The DfT (2005) reported that “recreational cycling has increased in recent years” and that “the 2003 monitoring survey by Sustrans of the National Cycle Network (NCN) indicates that there were 77 million cycling trips on the network, representing a year-on-year growth of 10% in the number of cycle trips”. However, it was acknowledged elsewhere that “cycling and walking levels have increased less than expected” (DfT, 2004d, p. 42). Despite generally acknowledged increases in “individualized forms of active recreation” (Ravenscroft, 2004, p. 29), there have, seemingly paradoxically, also been mirrored increases in obesity in England (Smith, Green, & Roberts, 2004; Wang, McPherson, Marsh, Gortmaker, & Brown, 2011). As such, one might argue that it is the reduction in every day physical activity, such as with the commute to work or school, combined with population changes in diet, that have contributed most to the apparent health issues that are of concern to the government (Hardman

& Stensel, 2009). Perhaps that “many trails have been developed opportunistically — as resources have become available — and are thus not linked to an integrated transport network, or to key destination sites” (Church, 2004, p. 30) was a key factor behind the national stagnation of cycling trip figures at this time. It would seem, therefore, “that too many routes have been designed solely for leisure and recreation, rather than seeking to reflect the multitude of motivations informing people’s use of the trails” (Church, 2004, p. 30), and thus, merely providing kilometres on designated cycling routes was insufficient if the aim was to increase cycling trips more generally.

Links to Schools (DfT, 2006) focussed on trying to generate more traffic-free and traffic-calmed routes to schools by extending the NCN, recognition, perhaps, of the need to ensure the network was more desirable for use beyond just active leisure pursuit. This was followed by the publication of a *Manual for Streets* in which the DfT (2007a) attempted to demonstrate “the benefits that flow from good design ... [that] assigns a higher priority to pedestrians and cyclists” (p.7). At the same time, Sport England (2007) published their own advisory document to those planning infrastructure in which they hoped to encourage “the design of development layouts ... [to] ensure that Active Travel Routes are made as direct as possible in order to encourage people to walk and cycle” (p.18). Once again, however, rather than being a funding-related requirement, these were only advisory documents. Nonetheless, there was an indication that the government were “also committed to developing a National Cycle Plan to further promote cycling as a mainstream form of personal transport” (DfT, 2009a, p. 9). Six months later a specific ‘national’ *Active Travel Strategy* was published jointly by the DfT and the Department of Health (DH) in February 2010. Despite years of policy focus and some financial investment, it was acknowledged that the UK had considerably lower levels of walking and cycling than many towns and cities in continental Europe, where it was acknowledged that conscious decisions were made “to develop planning and transport policies that favoured cycling over the car” (DfT & DH, 2010, p.10). As such, once again the DfT and DH (2010) claimed that they wanted to “put walking and cycling at the heart of transport and health strategies” (p.4) and make them “the preferred mode of local transport in England in the 21st century” (p.8) because “active travel policies work” (p.20). Several ‘success stories’ were cited where LAs had placed especial

emphasis on changing infrastructure and had achieved much higher rates of cycling. As such, the strategy was something of a guide in terms of how we can learn from these successes – whilst also recognizing that more needed to be done to actually systematically measure the effects of the steps taken where AT promotion had, seemingly, been more successful (DfT & DH, 2010). The strategy set no targets, however, in terms of increasing numbers of trips made by bicycle.

In opposition, the Conservative Party published a health manifesto in which they stated that with appropriate national policy “instead of the cyclist being seen as ‘a nuisance’ and by the planners as an afterthought, we can begin to move towards the Dutch model in which cycling becomes a standard part of everyday life” (Conservatives, 2010, p.26). However, the Coalition government, since forming in May 2010, continued in much the same vein as previous governments, whereby several publications continued to offer the same kind of rhetorical statements about the value of AT. Furthermore, Cycling England, which was set up under Blair’s government in 2005 as a non-departmental public body as one of many such bodies closed down immediately following the comprehensive spending review exercise performed by the Coalition government in October 2010. Despite the rhetoric about economic efficiency of promoting AT and the savings that could be made by doing so, in the wake of spending cutbacks, the budget and organization for cycling was reduced when there was a concomitant freeze on petrol duty because of the concern that the transport required to get the economy going again was motorized. This might be considered the dominance of ideology over evidence.

In January 2011, the Coalition government then published a White Paper on sustainable local transport (DfT, 2011a). Despite the closure of Cycling England, it was stated that “cycling and walking present an easy and cheap way for people to incorporate physical activity in their everyday lives. As well as the health benefits, they offer other benefits when they replace vehicle trips, including reducing carbon emissions, improving air quality, and reducing congestion” (DfT, 2011a, p. 42). AT lobby groups could be forgiven for thinking that they had read this all before in earlier policies. This trend continued into 2013 and when Public Health England (PHE), in association with the Local Government Association, released a briefing on how LAs can help to ‘tackle’ obesity through the promotion of AT. The aim here was to outline

various policies that can be adopted in order to create environments where cycling is encouraged (PHE, 2013). However this was once again dominated by isolated 'success stories' from various locations and recommendations on how local workers can make use of the national funding that is on offer. There was no evident push for national standards, despite alluding to the success of other European countries that had focussed on a more national scale. In fact the Coalition did not seem to set any national targets for cycling within their first four years in office (although the DfT (2011b) in their five year business plan did refer to the proportion of urban trips under 5 miles taken by cycling as one of several impact indicators).

In August 2013, the Coalition released their *Briefing on the Government's ambition for cycling* (DfT, 2013b). This was perhaps the first time that the Coalition had intended to publically reveal their intentions for AT. However, readers of this document may have once again sensed that they had seen much of the content in earlier policies. As has often been the structure for AT policies in England, the DfT began by restating the potential health and economic benefits that can be accrued from increased AT, before suggesting that there was an ambition to "capitalise on the growing interest in cycling and bring about a step change in levels of cycling across the country" (DfT, 2013b, p. 5). However, there was no mention of what this step change might look like, or any substantial 'evidence' provided for the supposed 'growing interest in cycling'. Whilst the document does cite the fact that "cycling has remained at 2% of journeys for a number of years" (DfT, 2013b, p.5), it did not look to establish any new national targets. This omission was then addressed in October 2014, when the Coalition government introduced the first draft of their *Cycling Delivery Plan* (DfT, 2014a), with an overarching aim to double cycling by 2025. As before, the government highlighted the substantial benefits that can be gained from increased cycling, however it was suggested that "a real step change in cycling cannot be achieved overnight, it requires strong leadership and commitment" (DfT, 2014a, p.4). Despite this the document did little to expand on previous policies, and thus did not seek to suggest what might be different about this new delivery plan.

The Conservative government, which took office in 2015, were relatively quick to outline their plans for AT. This began with an amendment to the 2014/2015 Infrastructure Bill (House of Commons, 2015), which legally ensures that the

government provides a cycling and walking strategy, accepted in the House of Commons. Whilst certain AT lobbyists remained sceptical about the outcomes of the amendment, many saw this development as a potential milestone for AT policy in England (Sustrans, 2015). However, such optimism was somewhat hampered when the government released their first document to follow the amendment, *Setting the First Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy* (DfT, 2015a), as no additional money for AT was identified. Instead, the DfT detailed the commitments already made by the Coalition in their previously published *Cycling Delivery Plan*. Those wanting to see what kind of investment the government would promise for AT then had to wait until April 2017, when they released their full Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS) (DfT, 2017a). In this document the DfT perhaps began to show how this policy might be different from those previously published by introducing a measurable long term goal for walking and cycling (DfT, 2017a). This goal was to double cycling, “where cycling activity is measured as the estimated total number of cycling stages each year, from 0.8 billion stages in 2013 to 1.6 billion stages in 2025” (DfT 2017a, p. 9). In addition, they recycled earlier policy statement goals to make walking and cycling “a normal part of everyday life, and the natural choice for journeys” (DfT, 2016, p. 6) by 2040. However, unlike the 2025 target, there were no actual figures attached to this ambition, simply a stated desire to improve AT specific infrastructure and the perceived safety of users. It was announced that just over £1 billion of funding was to be made “available to local authorities that may be invested in walking and cycling” between 2016 and 2021 (DfT, 2017a, p. 4). Although this was not to be proportionately spread across England’s LAs, with most of the share going to LAs who bid for funding. As has regularly been the case with policies described above, there are no obligations for LAs to apply for this funding, and there are still no stipulations on how LAs should go about improving AT provisions. Instead, the document focuses on yet more ‘case studies’ and ‘success stories’ from various public and private sector programmes. It is therefore difficult to see exactly how the government will improve on previous policies when, despite a clear target, the steps to reach such an outcome remain rather vague.

In much of the advisory, rhetorical statements that have been produced in the name of AT policy, a key feature has been on the importance of LAs and local businesses to implement policy effectively. However, as has already been alluded to, this

reliance on LAs, in particular, has been considerably problematic. It is to a discussion of this theme that we will now turn.

4.2 Reliance on local application of policy

The NCS was typical of several government policy documents that followed in simply providing a number of suggestions for how provision for cycling might be made within local areas. For example, LAs were “invited to contribute by establishing local targets” (DoT, 1996, p. 15-6). In addition, employers were also encouraged to promote cycling “as an integral part of plans by employers to reduce the land and maintenance costs of car parking provision, to reduce car use and to secure health benefits for their employees” (DoT, 1996, p. 20). Indeed, the central purpose of the NCS was “to convince both those responsible for providing our transport systems, and potential cyclists, that more cycling is a practical transport option offering desirable community and personal benefits” (DoT, 1996, p. 30). On the basis of such advisory rhetoric, how the DoT (1996, p. 18) really considered that “cycling must be seen as an integral part of a sustainable transport strategy, rather than a bolt on extra” is debatable. Furthermore, an unintended outcome, one might argue, of setting a national target, alongside the advisory level of engagement with LAs, was that no one single organization really took direct responsibility for achieving the targets. This is a process that has been identified in other policy areas, such as sport, where it has been argued that the propensity for organizations to assume personal responsibility decreases as the figuration in which they are placed grows (Lovett & Bloyce, 2017). Indeed, it has been argued since that the NCS “did not present a relevant challenge to each local authority” (Cycling England, 2007, p. 10), since many seemed to take a view that the national targets would be met elsewhere. It could be argued that this issue has remained ever since. This of course with the exception of London, and now Greater Manchester, where devolution deals have meant that target setting is very much their onus.

The Labour government introduced LTPs in March 2000 (DETR, 2000b). In helping to meet the NCS goals, which still featured, LAs were encouraged to incorporate “practical measures that should be considered in the LTP, to assess their possible contribution to tackling the problems of congestion and pollution” (DETR, 2000b, p.43). However, it was the apparent reluctance of LAs to adopt cycling strategies that

Lumsdon and Tolley (2001) attributed for the original NCS targets not being sustained. For their part, the House of Commons Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee (2001, cited in Gatersleben & Appleton, 2007) ascribed the failure to meet the target to “a fundamental lack of commitment to cycling, which can be found on a national, regional and an individual level” (p.303). Nonetheless, the targets that remained were considered “ambitious” by the DETR (2000a, p. 45) and they argued that they were “achievable” in part “by improved local provision for cycling”.

The Transport Act (2000, p. 66) published in November 2000 made it a statutory requirement for LAs to produce LTPs in which they were required to “develop policies for the promotion and encouragement of safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport facilities and services to, from and within their area”. However, no specific mention was made about the need to incorporate cycling within such plans. Although, in guidance provided to LAs on producing LTPs, “cycling trips” was one of a number of mandatory targets that was to be reported (DfT, 2004e, p. 27). As Gaffron (2003, p.235) notes, however, it seems that LAs were “encouraged – though not obliged – to include policies for pedestrians and cyclists” within their LTPs. Despite the continued focus on LAs, the DfT (2005) recognized that “in practice, our work with local authorities reveals that cycling, in most cases, is a significantly lower priority for transport investment than other outcomes, such as better public transport or small-scale highway improvements”.

One of the first, major areas of policy that Cycling England was to oversee soon after its inception in 2005, was the coordination of a new programme established in six different Cycle Demonstration Towns (CDTs). £7 million matched-funding was awarded over a three-year period from 2005 across the six towns for a variety of ‘soft’ and infrastructure measures in order to promote cycling as an alternative to other modes of transport. Results published after the end of the funding suggested that they were largely successful insofar as cycling increased across the CDTs. The increases involved people new, or returning to cycling, and not just those who were already cycling taking more journeys by bike. In addition, similar results were not found in comparable towns (DfT & Cycling England, 2009). In short, “the evidence

from the results of the first three years suggests that a start has been made – in brief, that the six towns have achieved ‘lift-off’ for cycling” (Sloman et al., 2009, p. 26). Despite this, Goodman, Panter, Sharp and Ogilvie (2013) suggest that success varied from town to town. As such, they argue that it is impossible to state if other towns would see increased levels of cycling levels with similar amounts of funding (Goodman et al., 2013).

In a report published in September 2007, just a few months after Gordon Brown had become Prime Minister, Cycling England were critical at the lack of serious concern given to cycling by the government, suggesting that “there remains a more fundamental level on which the barriers to cycling may be addressed, which as yet Government has not tackled – that is, at the level of policy” (Cycling England, 2007, p. 3). Thus, despite the numerous policy documents that had been produced concerning the promotion of cycling, either directly or indirectly, it was evident that Cycling England considered that these had done little to demonstrate a coherent policy focus. They proposed that, with appropriate funding, cycling proficiency training, through the newly established ‘Bikeability’ programme, should be “placed on the school curriculum, as a requirement in parallel with swimming” (Cycling England, 2007, p. 3). In addition, they demanded more reduced motor vehicle speed zones in key areas to encourage more cycling on the roads, which they claimed might “act as ‘invisible infrastructure’ which also serves to increase cycling” (Cycling England, 2007, p. 3). Finally, they proposed that there should be “a clear requirement that all new planning applications must include proper provision for walking and cycling” (Cycling England, 2007, p. 3). As such, Cycling England (2007, p. 6) set a new “target for Cycling England’s specific programmes to contribute an increase in national cycling levels of 20% by 2012”. The critical point for our understanding of this in relation to LAs is that Cycling England were especially keen for national targets to be set, for which they would take responsibility since, “in comparison to the former NCS target, Cycling England would be held accountable for the target, not local authorities” (Cycling England, 2007, p. 10). One might argue that this was a bold statement of intent, but Cycling England did not receive the backing, financially, that they claimed was needed to make this a possibility. Having suggested they would need £40 million to start up the projects, combined with a further £70 million per annum, they instead received £140 million over 3 years (DfT, 2008a). Whilst this

was, arguably, unprecedented sums of money, it was still clear from this that the government were not going to back their own non-departmental public body to the extent that Cycling England wanted, despite the fact that the government persistently stated the apparent financial benefits of AT.

Cycling England made a specific decision to allocate the vast majority of the £140 million funding over the three years to expand the CDT project. From this funding 11 different towns, and one city, were awarded CDT status. The CDT funding meant that, rather than the typical English LA spend to promote cycling, the CDTs would now receive a sum similar to that spent in more avowedly pro-cycling cities, such as Amsterdam (DfT, 2008b). However, as far as national guidance is concerned, the government continued to produce numerous, soft measure, advisory policies in which they encouraged employers to create more cycle friendly places of work, with changing and shower facilities being highlighted as important, alongside better, more secure places to 'park' bicycles (DfT 2008a), as well as to sign-up for tax-free incentives to encourage their workforce to cycle to work (DfT, 2009a). In addition, the DfT (2009b, p. 10) planned to produce "more tools, guidance and information to assist" LAs in their attempts to influence "the way we travel". This was despite the fact that, with the exception of the CDTs, the government acknowledged that "where investment has been made, too often this has been in a piecemeal fashion rather than integrated effectively into a wider sustainable transport plan and co-ordinated with health and social objectives" (DfT & DH, 2010, p. 42). Indeed, it was argued, "historically local authorities have chosen to spend relatively little of this on supporting active travel" (DfT & DH, 2010, p.42). As such, it was recognized that "one of the major barriers to more walking and cycling is that their full potential and benefits are not always fully appreciated by decision makers involved in local and community planning projects" (DfT & DH, 2010, p.24). This could, of course, vary across different LAs. Indeed from a large sample of local transport planners Gaffron (2003) concluded that there was a strong relationship between the employment of a cycling officer and the adoption of policies within LAs. What this demonstrates is that an 'official' interest in cycling can help to generate delivery. Nonetheless many LAs still tend to not give cycling and walking issues the attention many academics would suggest they deserve (SQW Consulting, 2008). The complexity of local politics in England, with different layers of governance, is not something that it is possible to

discuss in detail here. However, as Gatersleben and Uzzell (2010, p. 401) point out, “local politicians may in fact have had little control over local transport planning”, as “few councillors see themselves as policy-makers”. An issue, perhaps, that had been, and continues to be compounded by the ‘advisory’ nature of the national policies designed to supposedly increase AT.

Arguably, under the Coalition and Conservative governments the focus has been even more starkly oriented toward local implementation of AT policy. It was not until 2013 that the Coalition government began to demonstrate a significant financial commitment to AT provisions, this began with the introduction of Cycle City Ambition Grants. Much like the CDTs, Cycle City deals were formed with an aim to help the cities that obtained funding to carry out their cycling plans (DfT, 2013a; DfT, 2013b). After two separate rounds of funding allocations, eight different cities were awarded a share of £77 million, and then £114 million (DfT, 2014b). However, there was once again little direction over the details of these projects, instead bidding cities were simply “invited to set out ambitious long term plans” (DfT, 2014c, p. 4). In this respect, there is much continuity in the government’s level of involvement, despite the change of leadership. Furthermore, as with the CDT project, Cycle City funding only benefited the eight individual cities, therefore regular spending on a national scale remained elusive. Even within these areas the government funding alone did not ensure £10 per head of dedicated cycling funding (DfT, 2014b), a recommendation set by the newly-formed All Party Parliamentary Cycling Group [APPCG] (APPCG, 2013).

In total the Coalition government funded £588 million to AT projects between 2011 and 2015 (DfT, 2014b). This funding was said to have been largely distributed to LAs via the Coalition’s Cycle City Ambition Grants and Local Sustainable Transport Fund schemes (DfT, 2016), however, a breakdown of the total spend is not available. Nonetheless, the Coalition government also stated that their funding total was more than double the amount of funding that was allocated to cycling by New Labour (DfT, 2014a). Indeed an average of £147 million per year is well above the £60 million

annual budget – approximately £70 million in real termsⁱⁱ – New Labour had allocated to cycling in their final year in office. Furthermore, the APPCG funding recommendation did not go unnoticed, as the Coalition claimed that, with the support of LAs and businesses, they would work towards this target by 2021 (DfT, 2014a). However, figures provided in the 2017 CWIS show that this aim is not going to be achieved. In fact, whilst £1 billion of cycling and walking funding may seem like a major advancement on previous policies, when this figure is broken down only £5.30 (approx.) cycling and walking funding was allocated per head in 2016-2017. Funding is then due to drop to approximately £3.80 per head by 2020, which means that the government are seeking to double cycling trips with less than half of the APPCG's recommended amount (APPCG, 2013). As there is no clear explanation for this reduction in funding towards the end of the current government's term, it is perhaps another example of politicians preferring take offs to landings (Coalter, 2007). Nonetheless, perhaps the most significant issue here is that there are still no genuine stipulations to ensure that all LAs promote cycling and develop their provisions. This may only widen the gap between LAs (Aldred, Watson, Woodcock, Lovelace, 2017) as around 1/3 of the Conservative spend on cycling has thus far been allocated to the eight Cycle Cities (DfT, 2017a), whilst for many other LAs, there remains the issue of the perceived inability, or apparent reluctance to fund and implement AT schemes of their own.

A key feature of the policy documents examined for this paper was the concern for cyclists' safety set alongside the health benefits that could be derived from engaging in AT. Whilst environmental concerns had been the primary reason for attempting to promote AT previously, by the early 2000s the rapidly growing public and political concern with the supposed health/obesity crisis was increasingly permeating adjacent political arenas such as transport. We now look to examine the related issues of healthism and safety evident in the sample of policies.

ⁱⁱ This has been calculated by comparing the Retail Price Index (RPI) from 2010 to the end of 2015. RPI figures are supplied by the Office for National Statistics.

4.3 Active travel and healthism: Concern with safety and the focus on the individual

A consistent theme in policy documents since 1995 is that the government consider that individuals' concerns over safety are a major barrier to greater levels of cycling. Nonetheless, much policy has focused on persuading individuals of the health benefits associated with AT. Crawford (1980, p. 365) coined the term 'healthism' to refer to the process whereby 'the problem of health and disease' was situated 'at the level of the individual'. 'Solutions', he argues, have been 'formulated at that level as well' (Crawford, 1980, p. 365). There is, undoubtedly, a level of healthism in the policy documents for AT that have been examined for this paper, many of which proclaim that encouraging more cycling in everyday life could be a solution to the perceived growing health crises. Indeed, Aldred (2012) suggests that the healthism focus in AT policy can be linked to the time when AT was becoming a concern for the state, a time when the "responsible individual paradigm was emerging" (p. 96).

The DETR (2000c) published a road safety strategy in which providing greater consideration for cyclists was a feature. In this respect, it was claimed that "practical cycle training is effective and all children should have the opportunity to take it" (DETR, 2000c, p. 17). There was also a proposal for more 20 miles-per-hour (mph) zones (instead of the typical urban speed limit of 30mph) around schools in order to encourage parents, in particular, of the virtues of their children cycling to school and reducing the fear of fast motorized traffic around the school entrances. As well as increasing attention from the DfT, AT was considered within the Government White Paper, *Choosing Health* (DH, 2004). The DH (2004) provided support for employers to sign up to a "tax-efficient bike purchase from salary" (p.165) in order to encourage more individuals to take up cycling to work. They offered support for the DfT's schools travel strategy and set targets for increasing cycle lanes and tracks, as well as "incorporating ... public rights of way into local transport plans" (DH, 2004, p. 89). Nonetheless, key issues cited were individual "behavioural and psychological barriers" (DH, 2004, p. 89-90) to AT. Despite claiming that such barriers were an issue, the DH (2005) identified AT as the "easiest way for many of us to build activity back into our busy, time-pressurised lives" (p. 20).

The DfT (2004f) openly supported the notion that ‘soft measures’ were their preferred method of increasing the number of cycling trips when they published *Making Smarter Choices Work*, in which encouraging individuals to cycle more frequently, amongst other things, was the central premise of the policy. In this respect, emphasis was placed on improving the cyclists’ own individual safety and proficiency – rather than hard, infrastructural measures. As well as establishing the CDT project, the other major area of policy implementation for Cycling England was establishing the Bikeability cycling proficiency course. This was piloted from September 2006 and launched as a nationally available course from 2007. It is evident, therefore, that Cycling England (2007) were also especially concerned with the perceived barriers to cycling caused by individual concerns over safety.

The DfT (2007b) published *Toward a Sustainable Transport System* in which a number of goals were cited, including reducing emissions, promoting healthier travel options, concern about safety, and the need to “maximise the competitiveness and productivity of the economy” (DfT, 2007b, p.7) by attempting to produce the most efficient transport network. Despite the apparent growing focus on AT over the previous decade, the DfT (2007b) stated that there was still “much more scope in urban areas ... to promote cycling and walking as alternatives to the car” (p.82). In this respect, consideration was given to how to reduce speed and volume of motorized transport, whilst “encouraging local authorities” to provide “information directly to individuals [which] has been shown to lead to people making decisions about their travel choices that are often greener and healthier” (DfT, 2007b, p.50). This continued the theme in previous policies that had at their heart a broadly ‘healthism’ approach, where the focus was on encouraging individual lifestyle change rather more than on wholesale infrastructural change that had, seemingly, been more successful on the continent (Pucher, & Buehler, 2008), and within the CDTs in England.

Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives (DH & Department of Children, Schools and Family [DCSF], 2008) was the first key policy document published on health under the Brown-led government. It was suggested that “if the fabric of our urban and rural spaces is to change so that they encourage healthy living, then we need to go further” (DH & DCSF, 2008, p. 21) than had hitherto been the case. However, it

could be argued that what was included within the policy merely continued in the same vein as the previous Blair administration. For example, the DH and DCSF (2008) noted that “there is significant potential for promoting ... walking and cycling as viable alternatives to car use for” (p.20) journeys under 5 miles and that doing so “could have substantial benefits – not only for promoting healthy weight, but also for climate change, congestion and the wider environment” (p.20). The broad principle was then similar to what had been proposed before, that is to incentivize the wider population through various soft measures to get out of their cars and choose, for themselves, a more active form of transport. At the same time, the DfT (2008b) also emphasized the individual being encouraged to cycle: “In choosing to cycle, people can make individual choices that benefit themselves, their health and the reliability of their journey as well as the environment” (p.5).

In January 2009, Cycling England announced a number of pilot projects under the banner ‘Finding New Solutions: The Journey to Work and the Role of Leisure’ that were to launch in March 2010 for 12 months. A key aspect of the projects was to encourage individuals to take up and enjoy cycling as part of their leisure time “using leisure destinations where people who might never consider it can be targeted and introduced to cycling with a positive safe experience – with a follow up package of measures to help them towards more everyday cycling” (DfT & DH, 2010, p. 26). In other words, it seemed that the government had recognized that more people cycled in their leisure time than built it into an everyday aspect of their lives. As such, the projects also looked to focus on major employers to incentivize their workforce to cycle more often and worked with the various train operating companies to try and encourage a more effective mix of cycling and public transport use. Soon after the official launch of the Finding New Solutions project, however, Cycling England was closed down. Despite the closure of Cycling England, the Coalition government claimed to still be supportive of promoting cycling amongst a broader goal of promoting AT. The White Paper, *Healthy Lives, Healthy People* (DH, 2010), in which it was claimed that, via continued funding for Bikeability, “we are working towards every child being offered high-quality instruction on how to ride safely and confidently by the end of year 6 of school” (DH, 2010, p. 35). Furthermore, the *Strategic Framework for Road Safety* (DfT, 2011c) once again emphasized the perceived barriers to cycling that exist for many individuals, but also focussed on the real

danger for many cyclists. It was acknowledged that improvements had been made over the recent past in terms of cycling fatalities, for example, but that “in comparison to the overall road safety casualty data, in this area we are behind many other European countries” (DfT, 2011c, p.16), where even more people were cycling. The main focus in terms of how to reduce fatalities, however, was on educating the individual cyclist through the Bikeability scheme. So, once again, it was clear that the emphasis was on individual safety and motivation. This was clearly illustrated in the DfT’s (2011d) *New Ways to Increase Cycling* which examined the lessons from the Finding New Solutions programme. A key conclusion, it was claimed, was that “using incentives to nudge people into trying something out can be an effective way of facilitating behavioural change” (DfT, 2011d, p. 46). Elsewhere, it was recognized that “in reality bringing about behaviour change usually requires a package of interventions of which Nudge could be one aspect. This means that in addition to the right nudges being in place, complementary measures are needed” (DfT, 2011a, p. 35). However, there was very little indication given to what those complementary measures should be – or, precisely what the government was proposing it would do to encourage or implement them on a national scale. As indicated above, it was largely left to LAs and individuals themselves to take up

It would seem that the ‘healthism’ approach discussed in this section is problematic in a nation that is said to have a strong historical attachment to the car (Douglas, Watkins, Gorman, & Higgins, 2011; Aldred & Jungnickel, 2014). Elias (1978) used the concept habitus to refer to “the durable and generalised dispositions” (Maguire, 1992, p. 104) that people develop that become almost second nature to them in their interdependent relations with others. Over the last three or four decades, a substantial part of the habitus of most in the UK has been to use motorised forms of transport, even for the smallest of journeys. As such, it may be that more direct government policy is required to bring about any kind of ‘step change’ that successive governments have claimed to want to see in relation to the way people travel. However, cycling safety policy under the new Conservative government has largely spelled a continuation of local implementation, as the favoured approach has been to disseminate pots of funding to LAs and highways agencies. With the most recent example consisting of £6.5 million allocated to the eight chosen Cycle Cities in order to deliver safety improvements (DfT, 2018b). As discussed in the previous

section, if this approach to delivery is relied upon, government departments become highly dependent on LAs, who are themselves subject to constraints such as public opinions and internal ideologies (Stoker, 2004). Beyond funding, the new Conservative government have also shown a desire to develop current understandings of cycle safety in England by introducing a two-stage safety review (DfT, 2017b). However, this review does not seem to dramatically depart from the individualized approach taken by previous governments, as the stated purpose of the review is to consider “rules of the road, public awareness, key safety risks and the guidance and signage for all road users” (DfT, 2017b). Whilst such consultations may produce important findings for the government, research from other nations would suggest that perceived safety is unlikely to be successfully addressed if these issues are not considered alongside separated infrastructure schemes (Pucher & Buheler, 2008).

5. Conclusion

It is possible to draw a number of salient conclusions regarding the policy process generally, and the policy related to AT more specifically. It seems that AT policy has not brought about the apparently desired increase in cycling trips. The individual, healthism focus of the policies is likely to undermine the stated general policy aims, primarily because of the habitual commitment that individual people still show to motorized transport, and car use in particular. The advisory, largely rhetorical nature of much government policy is further compounded by the lack of obvious nationally set targets. Where targets have been set the heavy reliance on seemingly less willing, or less able, LAs and employers to implement such policy has been problematic. The government’s decision to favour advisory statements over legislation therefore limits their control over the policy process. Finally, the complexity of the networks of people and organizations involved in the AT policy figuration is a key, though by no means unique, feature that may help us understand the problems associated with achieving policy goals.

Data available from the DfT’s most recent NTS (DfT, 2018a) indicate that in 2016, only 2% of all trips were made by bicycle. This is approximately the same number of trips that were cited in the NCS when it was published in 1996. Thus, despite the

policies that have been examined for this paper since then that focus on AT, and promoting cycling in particular, the “frequency of bicycle use has remained fairly stable over time” (DfT, 2011d, p. 3). It is difficult to escape the conclusion, therefore, that if policies are introduced in order to achieve certain objectives, resolving, or at least ameliorating, an identified ‘problem’, as stated earlier, in this case the problem of congested transport and increasing population-wide physical inactivity that is contributing to increasing levels of obesity, that the policy has, thus far, failed. It could be argued that the largely rhetorical, advisory nature of the AT policies has contributed to this, insofar as Gaffron (2005, p. 195) argues that walking and cycling have been treated as marginal modes of transport “and something for the enthusiasts while the really important issues concern the motorised modes”. Therefore “the difficult question is how to make this politically acceptable” (Jones, 2012, p. 149). This is somewhat surprising given the apparent evidence that demonstrates that when active travel projects have been implemented they have often shown positive financial results (Government Office for Science, 2014), which would clearly be politically ‘acceptable’ in times of austerity. Indeed, “using the UK DfT’s ‘Cost Benefit Analysis’ methodology, walking and cycling schemes regularly return benefit to cost ratios (BCRs) of over 10:1, while the DfT regard a BCR of 2:1 as a good return on investment” (Insall, 2013, p. 63). This is a salient point as a report sponsored and supported by the DfT suggested that “decisions are likely to be swayed by the economic case as much as by the general congestion reduction, health or environmental benefits” (DfT, 2014d, p.40). However, of the 15.2 billion allocated to road schemes under the new Conservative government’s road investment strategy, only £1 billion is afforded to cycling and walking (DfT, 2015b). This accounts for around 6% of the total road budget. Despite this, the current administration has arguably begun to demonstrate a more serious commitment to cycling than their predecessors. However, this paper has shown that AT policy, like so many other policy areas, has been characterized by a sense of short-termism in relation to the short shelf life that such documents seem to have. Frequently new policies have been introduced that have done little, if anything, to build on previous policies, and often have not even made reference to them. Goals have not been clearly justified or explained, and often have been conveniently ignored in subsequent policy documents. Policy has been somewhat piecemeal. Indeed, AT policy seems to be characterized by the notion that the more things change, the

more they stay the same, and the policy makers seem to have been more interested in take offs and not landings (Weiss, 1993).

A significant problem faced by those wishing to promote AT is the habitus that has been generated in vast numbers of the population for the apparent ease and convenience of car usage. Indeed, it has been suggested that within low-cycling countries, such as the UK, cycling's non-transport connotations often tarnish people's perceptions of cycling and its potential benefits (Aldred, 2015). As Illich (1974, p. 42) argued four decades ago, "motorised vehicles create remoteness which they alone can shrink". This was a prescient point; for example, the unintended outcomes of the increasing cost of living, and therefore of renting shop space in inner cities, has contributed to a significant rise in 'out-of-town' shopping centres and business parks that are difficult to get to apart from via motorized transport. The car is now a 'luxury' so many are used to and so many are clearly reluctant to give up (Tolley, 2003). Focusing attention of the policy on encouraging and 'nudging' individuals to consider AT, therefore, is always likely to fail in this respect. As Gatersleben and Uzzell (2010, p. 402) argue "transport problems are typically collective problems; they are not caused by, nor can they be solved by, single individuals or groups". In light of this, a key criticism of such policies is that they are reductionist and, in essence, ignore social, economic, cultural and environmental issues. The notion that the individual can, therefore, choose to engage in AT, or not, ignores the enabling and constraining aspects of their socio-economic status and the environment around them. According to Powell (2015), Elias's historically informed work is able to contribute to this debate as it highlights limitations in the assumptions made by policy makers. For example, Elias had an interest in how the ministers under Louis XIV of France developed a fiscal policy that was heavily based on the interests of the state (Elias, 1969). However, opponents suggested that "one should first study the actual workings of society in order to create a sound fiscal policy" (Stuij & Stokvis, 2015 p. 219). Figurational sociologists would argue that a plan which does not consider such factors, and therefore holds a lower level of reality congruence, can lead to a high number of unintended outcomes. It could therefore be suggested that policies only have a chance of being successful if they consider the workings, values and desires of their target group (Stuij, & Stokvis, 2015). To that end, since the target groups of AT policies in

England largely desire motorized travel, it seems that more work is required to force a step change in AT (Pucher & Buehler, 2008).

Contrary to the above, throughout the policies examined, much of what was being proposed remained merely 'advice' with nothing being put forward that was to really force the issue for LAs or employers to instigate significant provision for AT. Despite government advice and requirements for LAs to produce LTPs in which cycling provision needs to be reported, LAs have been able to more effectively 'control' their local town planning – and many have, thus, seemingly largely ignored the advice. This provides a good illustration of the need to have a differential understanding of power when examining the implementation of national policies on the ground, so to speak. However, "it is unlikely that organisations will introduce a commuter travel plan unless legislation requires them to do so" (Gatersleben, & Uzzell, 2010, p. 390). Indeed, much of the policy has had "more to say about potential 'carrots' designed to entice motorists out of their cars, rather than the more powerful 'sticks' fashioned to force them out" (Docherty, 2003, p.14). However, Gatersleben and Uzzell (2010) argue that the lack of appetite for reduced car use in the UK would mean that positive, or 'carrot', interventions are unlikely to have any real impact. As such, they suggest that "more directive if not harsh measures are needed to 'persuade' car users to leave their cars" (Gatersleben, & Uzzell, 2010, p. 390). Such interventions may include those where the interests and legal rights of the cyclist on the road are placed above that of the motorized vehicle user, as is the case in The Netherlands (Pucher & Buehler, 2007). However, governments in low level cycling countries, such as Australia, the United States of America and the UK, are placed in an unenviable position, as there appears to a very limited mandate for these kind of interventions amongst their residents (Pucher & Buehler, 2008).

From the range of documents included in this sample it is clear that several government departments are now involved in the production of AT policy. However this development, it would seem, has made for a very complex policy figuration. Add to this the non-departmental public bodies, the LAs, NGOs and charities whose campaigns and strategy documents it has not been possible to include in this paper and one can appreciate the greater levels of complexity still. As a result of the sheer amount of organizations working on the delivery of transport and health related

policies, it could be argued, like in many growing policy areas, that very few are willing to accept total responsibility for the provision of AT, as it becomes easier to assume that this work is being done elsewhere (Bloyce & Lovett, 2012). This is compounded by the fact that the government department with most central responsibility over the last few decades for developing AT, the DfT (in all of its previous guises), is also the department responsible for producing policies for the motorist, and is likely to have been effectively lobbied by the very powerful pro-motorist organizations fighting against what they see as an attack on the motor vehicle and, thus, their civil liberties. This complicates the figuration even further as such contrasting intentions mean that it becomes increasingly difficult for each party to achieve their original goals (Elias, 1978). The DfT thus finds itself in something of a double bind that is always likely to impact on any future attempts to encourage AT in England.

Finally then, as an increase in AT has the potential to have a significant impact on many organizations working within the health sector, it may actually be the case that such policies need to be 'owned' by the DH as well as the DfT if any significant changes are to be seen (Pucher & Dijkstra, 2003). As has been the case with sport policy in England, it could be that this added dimension is what begins to sway local politicians, and perhaps the wider public, to seek out AT improvements. Indeed, this process seems to have already begun in recent years as the lead promise in most recent AT policies is continually centred on a highly positive cost-benefit ratio in relation to health budgets, with environmental concerns seemingly taking a 'backseat' (DfT, 2017a; DfT, 2018b). Furthermore, the PHE have recently released two AT policies, the latter of which specifically focuses on how the public health workforce can play a role in AT improvements (PHE, 2013; PHE, 2016). Whether this approach will have the desired impact remains to be seen. Whilst the countries who have seen more success from AT policy have not had to rely so strongly on the health debate, the UK is clearly building from a different position. However, with AT already said to be on the periphery of main transport business (Aldred, 2012), the concern is that the same will be the case for the DH if those tasked with delivering these policies continue to have no genuine stipulations to adhere to.

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Table 1. Publications included in the analysis.

Organization	Number of Documents
Department for Transport	56
Department of Health	8
Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions	5
Cycling England	3
Public Health England	3
Sport England	3
Department for Transport and Cycling England	2
National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence	2
Department of Transport	1
Department of Health and Department for Transport	1
Department of Health and Department for Children, Schools and Family	1
Department for Education and Skills and Department for Transport	1
Highways England	1
Government Office for Science	1
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister	1

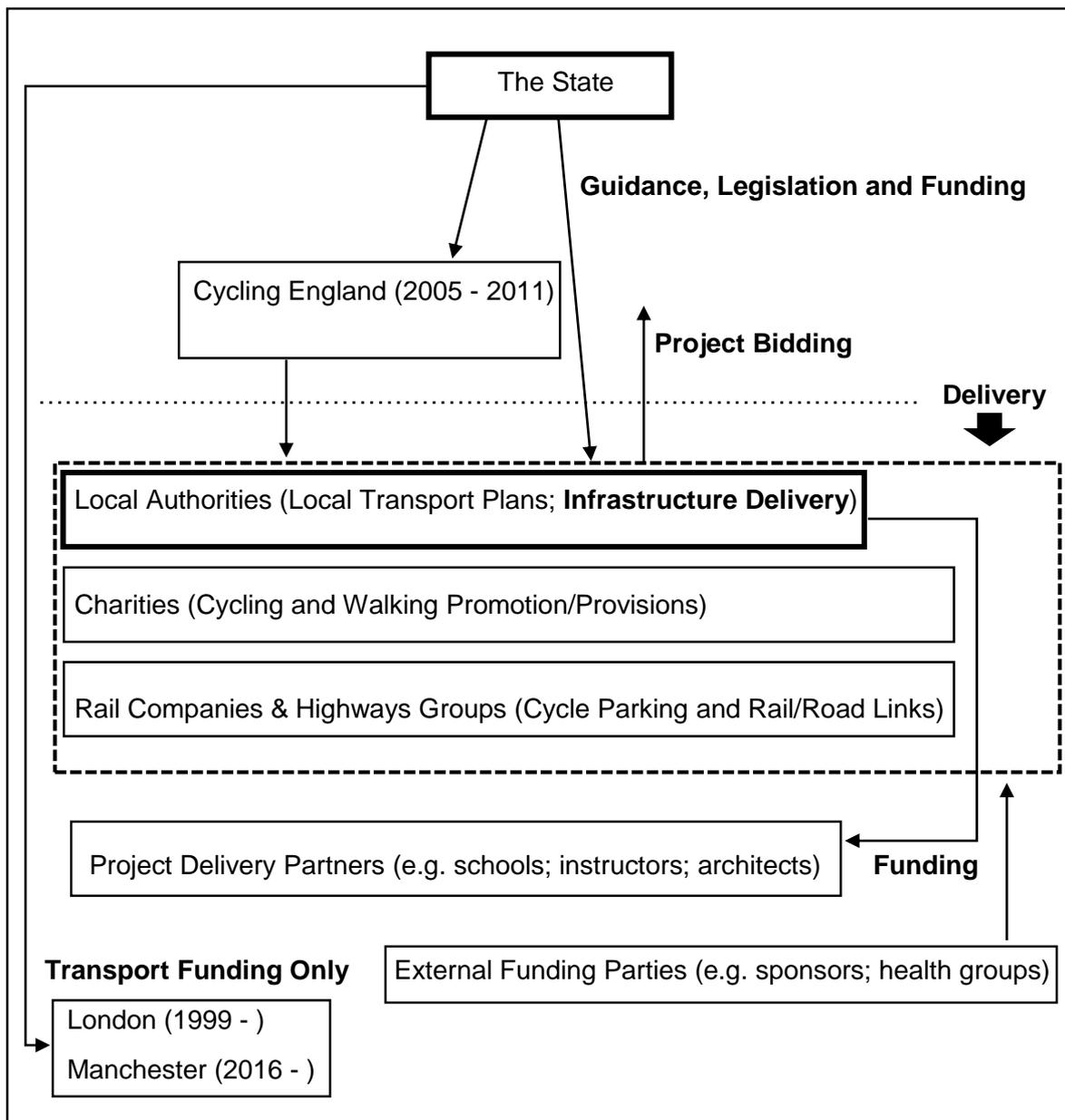


Figure 1. Schematic representation of cycling policy funding and delivery within England.

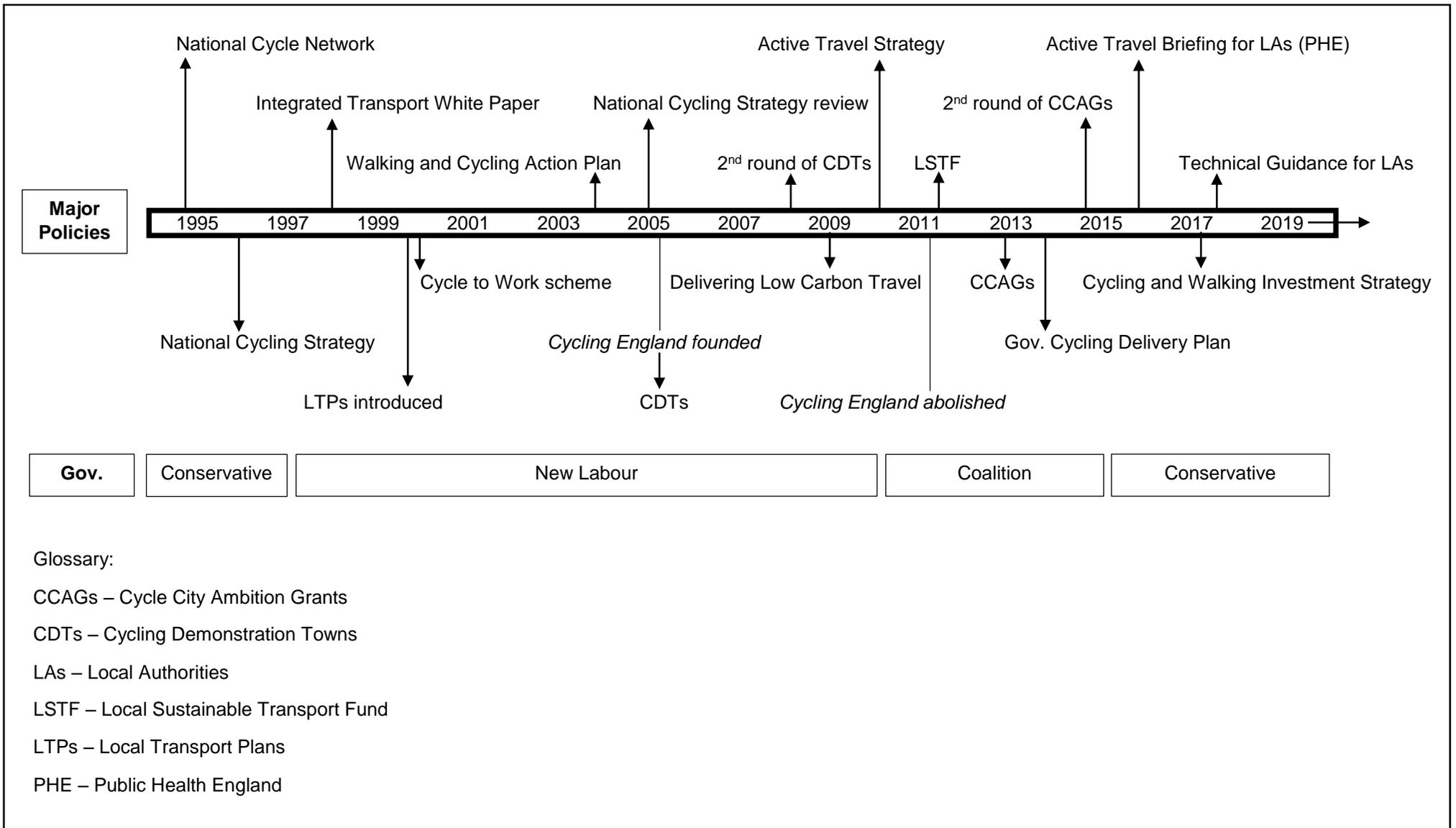


Figure 2. English active travel policy timeline (1995-2022).