

Rt Hon Stephen Dorrell
Chair, Health Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

10 December 2010

Dear Mr Dorrell,

HEALTH AND ACTIVE TRAVEL – THE PUBLIC HEALTH WHITE PAPER

Initially, allow us jointly to welcome you to your post as Chair of the Health Committee. We have all been engaged with the public health restructuring process that has begun to take place under the coalition government and see much to welcome in the new White Paper. It is now time to consider how these changes can be delivered within the new frameworks for public service delivery.

Today we write asking you to meet with us, in your capacity as Chair, to discuss the relationship between active travel - walking and cycling - and health, to consider the role of active travel as a preventative health measure. It may then be appropriate for us to consider with you how the committee can act to further the agenda, identify effective delivery and highlight good practice within the context of locally-managed public health services.

Physical activity is essential for physical and mental well-being. Some of the most disadvantaged groups in society are also the most sedentary, and the incidence of obesity, diabetes, cancer, coronary heart disease and mental health problems is higher among people in these groups. Active travel is an accessible and cost-effective way of incorporating physical activity into everyday lives.

The Public Health White Paper identifies a series of strategies to be published over the course of 2011. We were pleased to see that obesity and physical activity will be considered as priorities amongst them. The Government's simultaneous focus on public health intervention and on locally-delivered public services is extremely positive. We now look to the Health Committee to investigate how the two can be integrated to best effect.

With colleagues in the Health Working Group at 2020 Public Services Trust, you identified that "policies or interventions introduced to transform health and social care – whatever the 'means' – should be guided towards putting citizens at the centre of a socially productive relationship that aligns power and finance with the purpose of improved national health." This is a vital point to retain as we look for

good practice in the local delivery of public health improvements through active travel interventions.

We therefore request a meeting to discuss the role of active travel as a preventive health measure and effective delivery strategies within the context of locally-delivered public health services and the wider cross Government public health system and explore the potential role of the Committee in this regard.

We look forward to meeting with you to discuss this further or to provide additional information.

Yours sincerely




Malcolm Shepherd
Chief Executive, Sustrans



Paul Lincoln
Chief Executive, National Heart Forum



Dr Frank Atherton
President, Association of Directors of
Public Health



Professor Richard Parish
Chief Executive, Royal Society for
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Professor Lindsey Davies
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Tony Armstrong
Chief Executive, Living Streets

cc: Louise Ellman MP, Chair, Transport Committee
David Lloyd, Committee Clerk, Health Committee
Dr Mark Egan, Committee Clerk, Transport Committee
David Davis, Committee Specialist, Transport Committee