



Feature

FREEDOM TO MOVE

AHEAD OF THE GENERAL ELECTION IN JULY, CYCLING UK LAUNCHED ITS OWN MANIFESTO AND CALLED ON ALL CANDIDATES TO SUPPORT IT. **DUNCAN DOLLIMORE** REPORTS



DUNCAN DOLLIMORE
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Following the general election of 4 July, the Labour Party has now formed the UK government. Our asks for this new government are set out in Cycling UK's 'Freedom to move' manifesto for cycling, which was written (like the first draft of this article) before the election took place.

We campaigned furiously to persuade candidates to stand up for cycling if elected. By the time you're reading this, we'll have MPs from various parties elected across the UK who've pledged to support those asks over the next five years. But before outlining what they were, I'll start with why they matter.

It feels like longer, but only a couple of years ago there was a broad consensus among political parties in Westminster around the need to invest in active travel to get more people walking and cycling. It wasn't perfect. There was increased investment in active travel in England but it was well short of the amount needed. There were positive changes to the

Highway Code but without a long-term, well-funded awareness campaign to communicate those changes.

Then that consensus collapsed. Cycling was portrayed as a divisive issue amid toxic arguments about speed limits, low traffic neighbourhoods, emission zones and the behaviour of cyclists.

Some of the responses I received from parliamentary candidates during this election brought it home to me just how much work is needed to reset the narrative. These have included emails about cyclists "becoming even more obnoxious in their attitude", having "an inflated sense of their own virtue" and "an unrealistic sense of what a motorist can see on a rainy night", followed by calls for cyclists to be registered, taxed and insured, because the "ignorance" of cyclists is not "complemented by any humility". And these were people wanting your vote!

A MANIFESTO FOR CHANGE

Changing the public perception of cycling is one of the main objectives within