

All Party Parliamentary Group for Cycling & Walking CWIS2 Inquiry Report: Reaching Our Active Travel Potential

September 2021





“We were able to provide nearly 1,000 Brompton bikes to NHS workers”



Foreword

Over the last 18 months, we have totally re-imagined how we can move around in towns and cities. Since its invention, the bicycle has always been a reliable tool in crises and the COVID-19 pandemic is no different. With the support of the public, we were able to provide nearly 1,000 Brompton bikes to NHS workers, helping them to stay safe during the height of national lockdowns.

With the Coronavirus pandemic bringing into sharp focus the importance of mental and physical health, the role that cycling and walking can play in improving these outcomes cannot be underestimated. Building exercise and movement into daily routines through the simple act of riding a bike can dramatically lower the risk of a range of health problems, as well as removing the stresses that so often come with driving or being on crowded public transport.

Seeing more people embrace active travel was a small silver lining, all things considered, but an important one all the same. Especially as we look at how to tackle our inactivity crisis, reduce strain on the NHS and move towards a green recovery. If we're going to meet climate and air quality targets then mass adoption of cycling and walking is imperative.

“Seeing more people embrace active travel was a small silver lining, all things considered”

The recent sixth assessment report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was a stark reminder of the urgency to tackle climate change. The evidence could not be more clear; human action is directly causing a warming of the atmosphere, ocean and land - and the consequences are severe. From wild-fires across Europe to increases in freak weather events around the world, it is abundantly clear that we cannot continue with things as they are.

In light of the report, many people are asking what can be done to heed this report and turn concern into tangible action. In the UK, transport is the single largest emitting sector of greenhouse gas emissions, producing over a quarter of our total emissions in 2019. With 68% of trips in England being taken by car under 5 miles, there is a real opportunity to drastically reduce our emissions from transport by

enabling and empowering people to take more of those journeys by bike or on foot.

This inquiry by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Cycling and Walking (APPGCW) is a vital piece of work and Brompton are proud to support it. The report focuses on what the Government should consider including in their upcoming second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS) to harness the wider positive work already being done in this area.

The recommendations include: significantly increasing funding for active travel, setting active travel targets in line with Net Zero, and giving Active Travel England a broader role.

We also believe that electric bikes could be transformative to the growth of cycling; they unlock cycling for many more journeys by a wider range of people.

We welcome measures announced so far to help people discover the benefits of e-bikes, but more needs to be done if we are to genuinely decarbonise transport. Electric bikes are the only electric vehicles not to receive a plug in grant from the government

and this cannot be the case if we are serious about meeting net zero targets.

There has never been a better time to fundamentally change and improve the way that we travel in British cities, towns and villages. As Britain's largest bicycle manufacturer, we're here to support the government's bold support for active travel - whether it's world-class cycle lanes or e-bike subsidies, we now need the funding to match the rhetoric.

Will Butler-Adams OBE
CEO, Brompton Bicycle Ltd



Ruth Cadbury MP



Selaine Saxby MP

“This set of recommendations is a practical and constructive response to the situation and one that we believe will help England to achieve its active-travel potential.”

Introduction from our co-chairs

This feels an exceptionally exciting and hopeful time for active travel. The UK government has shown unprecedented commitment to growing walking and cycling in England (Gear Change + update): in addition to there being serious money on offer for the first time in living memory, last year’s Local Transport Note on cycle infrastructure design (LTN1/20) has established a clear expectation that facilities must be of a high standard. Meanwhile, preparations continue for the establishment of Active Travel England and this could change the policy landscape significantly.

It was against this very positive background that we commissioned this inquiry, with a particular focus on the second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy, which the Government is due to release in the coming months.

Since then, **the latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** confirms the gravity of the situation and the urgent need for action. It is widely acknowledged that active travel has a huge amount to offer in the response to climate change, in addition to its massive benefits with respect to public health, air quality and economic vitality too. So our inquiry seems even more timely now than it did when we commissioned it.

The challenge within the world of active travel is significant, too. Many local authorities have had to reduce their capacity over the last ten years and many are struggling to respond to the opportunities that recent funding has offered. Furthermore, projects promoting walking and cycling are not universally popular. So there is much to do. This set of recommendations is a practical and constructive response to the situation and one that we believe will help England to achieve its active-travel potential.

**Ruth Cadbury MP and Selaine Saxby MP
Co-chairs All Party Parliamentary Group
for Cycling & Walking**

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The inquiry

Our call for evidence was launched on 15th June 2021 and invited written submissions from all interested parties, with a deadline of 16th July. Written submissions were received from 25 organisations and six individuals. [These submissions can be seen in full here](#)

The inquiry also featured three virtual hearings, at which experts gave evidence on a range of topics relevant to growing active travel. The hearings are summarised in Table 1 and the recordings of the sessions are available to view [here](#).

Table 1: Summary of hearings

	Theme	Witness	Role	Organisation
Hearing 1, 2nd July	Local and central government	Kamal Panchal	Senior Adviser	Local Government Association
		Mark Frost	Chair	Transport Planning Society
	Decarbonisation, levelling up and justice	Becca Massey-Chase	Co-Deputy Head, Environmental Justice Commission	IPPR
		Rebekah Diski	Just transitions, Environment and Green Transition team	New Economics Foundation
Hearing 2, 9th July	Perspectives of the Walking and Cycling Alliance	Steve Edwards	Acting CEO	Living Streets
		Roger Geffen	Policy Director	Cycling UK
		Rachel White	Head of Public Affairs	Sustrans
		Phillip Darnton	Chairman	Bicycle Association
		Chris Boardman	Policy adviser	British Cycling
Hearing 3, 16th July	Most effective policies	Dr David Ogilvie	Programme Leader and MRC Investigator	Centre for Diet and Activity Research (CEDAR), University of Cambridge School of Clinical Medicine
	Effective programme planning and management	Andy Murray	Executive Director	Major Projects Association
	Inclusive active travel	Kirsty Hoyle	CEO	Transport for All
		Dr Kay Inckle	Policy & Campaign Manager	Wheels for Wellbeing
		Georgia Yexley	Head of Cities (UK and Ireland)	TIER Mobility

In addition to seeking the views of those most closely associated with the English active-travel sector, we also sought contributions from organisations whose expertise was, we felt, highly relevant to the inquiry but who might not normally be associated with this field. Several, including the Major Projects Association, the IPPR and New Economics Foundation, participated. Two organisations we approached, the National Audit Office and the National Infrastructure Commission, were unable to participate in the hearings

but submitted written evidence. And many of the organisations that did participate in the hearings also submitted written evidence. We invited the Department for Transport and HM Treasury to give evidence but they were not able to provide witnesses.

Recommendations

Funding

Our witnesses unanimously welcomed the recent funding commitments made by government. Alongside this optimism was strong agreement (including British Cycling, Sustrans, Cycling UK, Living Streets) that it is now necessary for the ambition of Gear Change to be supported by a sum of money sufficient to meet that ambition, particularly with the Net Zero commitment in mind. For example, Cycling UK referred to estimates of a need for between £6 billion and £8 billion in order to meet the active-travel targets set in the first [Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy](#); the Faculty of Public Health called for a spend of £25-£30 per person per year; and Kent Active Travel Campaign Group Network stated that the Dutch spend £35 per person per year excluding cycle parking. There was also a strong call from a local-government perspective (Local Government Association, National Infrastructure Commission, ADEPT (Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport), Mark Frost, and Wiltshire County Council) for funding to be longer term and more secure. There was broad consensus in favour of five-year settlements, and a lasting move away from having to compete for short-term funding “pots”. These voices also drew attention to the need for the sector to build its capacity in order to perform at the level required.



By practically any measure, active travel represents astonishingly good value for money



1. Call it the Active Travel Investment Strategy

We received evidence (Wheels for Wellbeing, Transport for All) that “cycling and walking” is too limiting a term, given the groups who neither walk nor cycle but who do travel actively and rely on funding, policies and infrastructure to support this. Evidence from other witnesses (CoMoUK, Cycling UK, Living Streets) drew attention to the emergence of new modes that qualify as active travel and share the use of spaces for walking and cycling.

These are two reasons for preferring the working title above, notwithstanding that the legislation may require that it be called the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy. In addition, by omitting “cycling”, it lessens both the risk of tribal thinking – almost everyone travels actively to at least some extent – and the risk that it be seen as a strategy for “cycling (and walking)”, with cycling receiving the lion’s share of attention and funding.

2. Significant further increase in funding for active travel

Achieving Net Zero will require a major increase in active travel, as made clear in the [Transport Decarbonisation Plan](#). For example, the West

Yorkshire Combined Authority estimates that walking must increase by 80 per cent and cycling twenty-fold by 2038 if the area is to meet its climate targets². Welcome as the £2 billion announced in May 2020³ (approximately £7 per person per annum) is, the necessary magnitude of growth in active travel implies a much greater level of spend. The sum required will be determined by the national active-travel target (see below) but £25 per person per year appears to be a reasonable working estimate. This is more than the sector can spend at the moment given its current capacity, which is why we recommend a five-year settlement that “back-loads” funding towards the final years.

We acknowledge that this is a step change in funding beyond the already very encouraging sums recently made available by government. But, by practically any measure, active travel represents astonishingly good value for money; moreover, our carbon commitments are highly ambitious and active travel has a huge role to play in meeting them. If it is not possible for the Treasury to provide additional funding to meet the need, we recommend a reallocation of the Department for Transport’s core budget, of which active travel receives a disproportionately small share.

2. <https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/media/4277/west-yorkshire-carbon-emission-reduction-pathways-technical-report-draft-v7-1.pdf>
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/2-billion-package-to-create-new-era-for-cycling-and-walking>

1. By 2025: to increase annual cycle stages to 1.6 billion; to increase walking to 300 stages per person per year; and to increase the proportion of children aged 5 to 10 that usually walk to school to 55%.



We call for a review of the subsidy arrangements relating to electric vehicles to include electric cycles.

3. Five-year settlement for each transport/highway authority

A funding horizon of five years is optimal long enough to enable transport/highway authorities to build teams and manage programmes successfully but at the same time giving central government the fiscal control it needs. Witnesses mentioned National Highways (formerly Highways England) and Network Rail as two organisations that have benefited from the certainty of such a funding arrangement. And we note a commitment from government to “creating a long-term budget for cycling and walking similar to what happens for roads⁴”.

An in-principle sum would be allocated to each authority, based on analysis of current and potential levels of active travel, and consistent with national targets (see below). This bears some similarity to the pre-pandemic allocation process for highways maintenance funding. As each authority submitted its statutory Active Travel Plan (described below), a negotiation process would then take place, led by Active Travel England, leading to a firm allocation split over the five years.

Funding would be granted subject to the authority passing an annual review process, again

supervised by Active Travel England; the Active Travel Plan would be updated on an annual basis accordingly. As made clear in Gear Change and its update, there would be scope for “clawback” where funds had not been used as agreed or where implementation had fallen significantly short of a relevant standard; this could extend to all highways money and not just the active-travel allocation. Active Travel England would be empowered to recommend the reallocation of “clawed back” money to authorities considered well placed to use top-up funding.

Whilst certainty is essential, rigidity would be harmful, so we recommend some freedom for authorities to move funds between elements of their programmes to reflect changing circumstances.

Assuming that the capital/revenue split should at first be 70/30 (as argued by Cycling UK, Living Streets and Sustrans), it is also desirable for authorities to be able to move modest amounts between their capital and revenue allocations, again when circumstances demand. In saying this, we note that revenue projects can deliver surprisingly quick results compared with most capital spending and can offer targeted assistance (to particular groups, for example) in a way that capital projects tend not to.

4. Support for the active-travel industry

Alongside the support for local government set out above, we propose a separate sum be allocated to enabling the UK’s active-travel industry to grow and become more resilient. Following the UK’s departure from the European Union, there is a case for increasing the UK’s autonomy in producing cycles and other equipment necessary for active travel and for building its international standing in planning and design. A modest fund could be used to support the expansion of established companies and to incubate start-ups.

5. Levelling up e-bikes

Reflecting evidence we received (Brompton Bicycle Ltd, COVID-19 Transport, Travel and Social Adaptation Study team - TRANSAS), we call for a review of the subsidy arrangements relating to electric vehicles. In line with Brompton’s evidence, we question the fairness of a system that provides a plug-in grant for all electric vehicles except e-bikes. We are also convinced by TRANSAS’ argument that the threshold for the cycle-to-work scheme should be raised to a level that would allow the purchase of e-bikes, mobility cycles and e-cargo bikes.

6. A fair deal for disabled cyclists

As argued by Wheels for Wellbeing, there is a strong case for reviewing the financial arrangements that govern vehicles used by disabled people. At present, the Motability scheme provides (subsidised) access to powered wheelchairs, mobility scooters and cars but not to non-standard cycles. It should be expanded to include cycles (including e-cycles) for disabled people. Taxation rules should also be adjusted to make the purchase of cycles used as mobility aids VAT-exempt.

4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/2-billion-package-to-create-new-era-for-cycling-and-walking>

Targets

There was broad agreement amongst contributors to the inquiry (for example, New Economics Foundation, IPPR, members of the Walking and Cycling Alliance) that targets are needed to guide the work of growing active travel; the right targets will provide focus and accountability. The challenge lies in choosing those targets, and there was less consensus in the evidence we received concerning the nature and level of active-travel targets. Some (Living Streets, Sustrans) argued that the 300 walking-stages target needed to be replaced because it was insufficiently ambitious; others (New Economics Foundation, Cycling UK) that what was needed first was a target for reducing car use, from which an active-travel target could be derived. Our recommendation is to start with Net Zero, because it constitutes a legally-binding and time-bound commitment; a target based on Net Zero would therefore be harder to walk away from than the more arbitrary targets set for active travel in recent years.



Given the transport sector must reach net zero by 2050, active travel will clearly play a major role

7. Set national active-travel targets consistent with Net Zero

Given the transport sector must reach net zero by 2050, active travel will clearly play a major role, but how major will depend on both the volume of motorised travel and the power sources used. We therefore recommend analysis be commissioned, first to establish reasonable working assumptions concerning the levels of these background variables and, second, to use those assumed values to derive realistic estimates of the volumes of active travel needed in 2050 and at regular intermediate milestones.

8. Transport/highway authorities to negotiate local targets consistent with national targets

Using data on topography and land use, central government should calculate provisional active-travel targets at the transport/highway authority level that are consistent with the England-level targets. These will reflect the fact that densely populated urban areas are, on average, more able to support large volumes of active travel. These provisional local targets will be approximate so transport/highway authorities will need to move from them to agreed targets which should then be formally absorbed into local policy. We recommend this negotiation process be led by Active Travel England, which can

balance local claims with the need to ensure that agreed local targets are consistent in aggregate with the England-level targets. We appreciate that this process will be resource-intensive and for this, and other reasons, are recommending an early investment from the Department for Transport specifically to support the recruitment of more staff by transport/highway authorities.

Once local targets are agreed, authorities will be expected to introduce additional detail such as sector-specific targets (e.g. walking or cycling for a particular purpose) and/or group-specific targets (e.g. children, people at increased risk of poor health) as they see fit, to reflect local priorities such as air quality, road safety and public health.

9. Develop national targets for mobility justice in active travel

Some witnesses (Georgia Yexley, Transport for All) argued that it is too early to create appropriate targets concerning inclusion and equity in active travel. The research exercise recommended below (under Knowledge Gaps) is intended to provide the necessary information and we expect a process of target-setting to be possible within two years. The temporary absence of such targets requires all engaged in active travel to pay special attention to mobility justice: whilst the Equality Act and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) may provide a welcome backstop, all delivery agencies should continually be asking themselves and their stakeholders whether their plans satisfy norms of justice. This is a theme to which we return below, under Standards.



Active Travel England⁵

Active Travel England (ATE) was repeatedly mentioned by our witnesses and in written evidence, revealing a wide hope that it will enable a step change in growing active travel. For example, the Local Government Association called for ATE to be a source of best-practice guidance and support for local government; Wiltshire County Council saw value in ATE acting as a voice for local government in dealings with the Department for Transport; and the Faculty of Public Health recommended that ATE have public health representation on its board as well as a clear role for public health specialists in its decision making.

10. Active Travel England to establish active-travel quality mark

In keeping with being a champion of best practice, we recommend Active Travel England (ATE) establish an active-travel quality mark, embracing all aspects of growing and supporting active travel. This would enable authorities doing the best work in the field to be recognised as beacons. Transport/highway authorities and other relevant organisations seeking accreditation would put themselves forward for assessment by ATE which would then conduct a thorough audit of working practices and finished projects, leading to a detailed report. In the event that an authority was deemed not yet to meet the necessary standards, this report would provide clear guidance on improvements to make before reapplying.

More broadly, ATE would be a source of training, advice and documentation for those working in active travel, as announced in Gear Change. In particular, it would maintain a knowledge base on the effectiveness of a wide range of interventions, and hold a library of template designs for infrastructure measures. These resources could save individual transport/highway authorities considerable time and effort whilst at the same time providing quality assurance.

11. Active Travel England the funder for inclusive projects, national projects and “what works?” research

We recommend Active Travel England be given control over an “inclusive active travel” fund which it would use to support organisations working to enable under-represented groups to participate more fully in active travel. It would also manage a “national active-travel fund”, to support strategic projects such as the National Cycle Network.

Active Travel England (ATE) can use its position between local and central government to act as an honest broker in negotiations.

Finally, it would preside over a “what works?” evidence fund. Its purpose would be to fund projects (supported in all cases by gold-standard evaluation) designed to reveal the impact of measures intended to grow active travel, with emphasis on novel interventions and on interventions which appear promising but for which the evidence base is currently weak.

12. Active Travel England to act as trusted mediator

Active Travel England (ATE) can use its position between local and central government to act as an honest broker in negotiations. For example, where multiple authorities wish to implement a design or policy that is not permitted by prevailing regulations, ATE could make representations to the Department for Transport on behalf of the authorities. In addition, where a route crosses a boundary between neighbouring authorities and an agreed design does not naturally emerge, ATE should manage the negotiations in pursuit of a mutually acceptable solution.

5. Throughout this report, we recommend various ways Active Travel England could be involved in growing active travel, mainly in terms of managing the relationship between central and local government. In this section we set out additional ways we see it contributing positively to the sector.

Network and programme planning

Despite an understandable emphasis on infrastructure in the evidence we received, many witnesses and contributors drew attention to the role of complementary measures in growing active travel. Many (including Sustrans, British Cycling and Cycling UK) mentioned cycle training; Sustrans in addition raised subsidy of cycle hire in deprived areas and Cycling for Health was discussed by Cycling UK as a prototype for social prescribing. The potential of revenue schemes to provide targeted assistance was discussed extensively when we covered justice and inclusion in our hearings. And there was general acknowledgement both that complementary schemes can provide good returns on investment and that the combination of infrastructure and complementary measures can be very effective. What is currently lacking is a structure that will encourage transport/highway authorities to plan capital and revenue schemes coherently together. We address this gap with our recommendation of *Active Travel Plans*.



Each transport/highway authority would be asked to develop an Active Travel Plan.



13. Active Travel Plans to set out detailed, costed five-year programmes

Under the arrangements we recommend, each transport/highway authority would be asked to develop an Active Travel Plan. This document would serve as the basis for negotiations with Active Travel England over funding allocations and would become the reference document for the authority's programme of projects and policies directed at growing active travel. We recommend that the Active Travel Plan be closely linked to an authority's Local Transport Plan, to maximise the opportunities for effective integration between plans for active travel and those for public transport and highway and traffic management.

The Active Travel Plan would result from an evidence-based and methodical planning process and authorities would be expected to make the Plan's development as inclusive as possible. At the Plan's core would be the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP, see below) and this would be accompanied by a programme of complementary projects and policies. As part of the planning process, authorities would be expected to have considered the widest range of possible interventions, including (but not limited to) marketing and information campaigns, outreach and empowerment programmes, collaborations with public health practitioners, subsidised

access to cycles and other equipment, cycle training, parking, and cycle hire. Given increasing recognition of the potential contribution of assisted cycles to growing active travel and replacing car trips, authorities should also give full consideration to their role. The Plan would provide a narrative that explains why the programme is expected to offer the best path towards achieving local targets whilst addressing aims of equity. It should also demonstrate pragmatism: if some elements of the Plan are likely to be controversial, it may be wise to deliver less controversial measures first.

The Active Travel Plan would serve as a programme-management tool, providing clarity concerning who would be expected to deliver what, how, by when and at what cost. It should include elements for training the authority's staff in key skills required for the delivery of the Plan, for community engagement associated with the design process, for monitoring programme impact, and for adequate maintenance of capital assets.

Authorities (especially those starting from a low base) should assume a ramping up of activity as they build teams and conduct design and engagement activities prior to implementation, with the expectation that expenditure would be concentrated in the latter part of this first five-year period. This is consistent with our recommendation concerning the allocation of funding at the national level.



LCWIPs must pay sufficient attention to multi-modal trips

14. Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans providing a coherent, balanced active-travel network that includes rights of way

Our comments on Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) are made in the knowledge that the guidance for developing LCWIPs is currently being revised.

Witnesses were generally positive about LCWIPs and the associated guidance, though they pointed out that the lack of funding to support them explained a lack of ambition in the plans. Whilst there is an understandable urge to deliver infrastructure changes thought likely to lead to the largest increases in active travel, all changes must be made with equity very much in mind. The existing version of the LCWIP guidance encourages authorities to cater for major flows, which explains a tendency to give priority to commuter routes. For, whilst the journey to work constitutes a relatively small share of trips, it tends to be more concentrated spatially and temporally than trips for other purposes, leading to its being a natural focus of attention in network planning. Meanwhile, it is easy to miss “latent demand” – journeys that are not currently made (because individuals face barriers to using active travel), but which would be

seen if conditions improved. A more circumspect approach to network planning would mean the priority placed on a link will reflect more than just the likely flows along it but also who might be using that link and how important the journey might be to them.

Because of the natural limits to distances most people can readily travel by active modes, LCWIPs must pay sufficient attention to multi-modal trips, where active travel is combined with a form of sustainable motorised transport. This points to a strong focus on public transport stops/stations as critical nodes in the network. And, as well as ensuring that the network provides adequate access to these, authorities must also make them function effectively as nodes, by attending to their accessibility and other details such as cycle parking and cycle hire. In this regard, the Cycle Rail Delivery Group provides a useful model for collaborative planning and delivery.

LCWIPs will also need to embrace opportunities to make use of rights of way, providing parallel paths (or shortcuts, for that matter) where there is no scope for safe and comfortable on-highway provision.



Active travel and land-use planning

A recurring theme in the evidence we received (Community Rail Network, Cycling UK and Transport Planning Society) was concern that major developments will continue to be built that are car-dependent and lack adequate provision for active travel. Cycling UK in particular raised criticisms of the Planning White Paper in this regard.

Active Travel England would have powers to refer applications to the Secretary of State.

15. Active Travel England to have meaningful influence over development proposals and policies

The government announced in Gear Change that Active Travel England (ATE) would become a statutory consultee on new developments, “to press for adequate cycling and walking provision”; this process is currently being piloted by Sustrans. Whilst this is welcome, we want ATE to have teeth: it will not be adequate for planning inspectors simply “to take note of” a critical report from ATE in their deliberations - as argued by the Transport Planning Society, ATE would have powers to refer to the Secretary of State applications that are seen to fall short. We do not underestimate the resource implications of this proposal but the risk of creating car-dependent developments with inadequate provision for active travel makes it essential.

Skills and capacity

The issues of skills and capacity arose repeatedly during our hearings and in the written evidence we received. The Local Government Association quoted the Institute for Fiscal Studies' estimate that council spending on transport had fallen 42 per cent in the last decade; this message of diminished capacity (and, by association, skills) was echoed by Mark Frost and Wiltshire County Council. In addition to this general lack of personnel, we were told by Transport for All about a specific deficit in inclusive planning skills. The Major Projects Association pointed out the need for transport/highway authorities to acquire skills in programme management, systems thinking and change management, reflecting their evolving roles. They also identified areas in which central government could benefit from skills development, notably in portfolio management. And the need for engagement/consultation skills was mentioned in numerous submissions, including those of ADEPT and the Local Government Association.

Local government will need rapidly to increase its capacity in order to deliver the volume of activity necessary.

16. Central government to support transport/highway authorities in rapidly acquiring skills and capacity

Local government will need rapidly to increase its capacity in order to deliver the volume of activity necessary. Certainty of funding will of course be a major enabler. In addition, central government should provide incentives to draw talented people into the sector and sponsor training and apprenticeships so that they acquire the skills they need as quickly as possible.

To complement the design capability and regulatory knowledge which delivery agencies always needed, it is increasingly clear that they also require excellent skills in engagement and communication and in programme management. They will also benefit from acquiring systems-thinking and change-management skills – the first will assist with anticipating unintended consequences of actions and the second with the transition that both communities and local government will be undergoing.

On a separate note, the scope for authorities to generate revenue locally, through mechanisms



such as workplace parking levies and congestion charge zones, should be borne in mind. Central government can assist local bodies in choosing and implementing such initiatives by providing technical advice on the process, and making it easier and simpler to introduce these traffic-restraint

17. Central government to acquire the skills needed for its changed role

Whilst the greatest change is envisaged at the local level, the Department for Transport and Active Travel England will both have to respond to the increased autonomy being granted to transport/highway authorities. As portfolio managers (rather than programme managers), they will have to become adept in working at this level and in seeking balance across portfolios. And, as data become increasingly important to successful planning and delivery of active-travel interventions, central agencies will be required to collate and share data and to extract meaning from it efficiently, so should prepare accordingly.

Legislation and standards

Cycle Infrastructure Design (Local Transport Note 1/20), has been universally praised for setting exacting standards and providing delivery agencies with sufficient detail to implement them. The message from oral and written evidence is that LTN1/20 is seen as positive not just because it demands high quality but because it provides a firm benchmark against which infrastructure works can be assessed. British Cycling praised in particular the provision of accessible training in applying the standard. Having set the bar high, Wheels for Wellbeing told us that the government now needs to follow through with equivalent standards for pedestrian environments, producing “an LTN1/20 for pavements”; along similar lines, British Cycling asked for the forthcoming revised Manual for Streets to perform the same role for pedestrian environments as LTN1/20 is doing for cycling. A more radical proposal came from Phil Jones (Chair of Phil Jones Associates), who calls for a new Highways Act to impose upon highways authorities a set of duties consistent with the policy imperatives we now face.

Authorities should make it their long-term aim to bring their entire network up to standard

18. Exacting quality standards for pedestrian environments

As we write, a new version of the Manual for Streets is being prepared, and we recommend that it address at least some of the following.

Just as LTN1/20 has set out a higher quality threshold in providing for cycling, an equivalent standard is required for pavements and other pedestrian environments. What it must deliver is genuine justice across modes: if carriageway and cycleway standards provide a given level of service in terms of ease of passage and comfort, standards for pedestrian environments must equal or better this level.

The standard will need to address: widths and absence of obstructions; levels; gradients; cambers; surface condition; tactile paving; and provision of crossings. In doing so, it must live up to or exceed the principles of the Department for Transport’s Inclusive Mobility (2005). More specifically, it should promote continuous footways and short waiting times at crossings, enable safe movement between the footway and cycling infrastructure (where present), and protect the footway from being dug up as a way of avoiding lane-rental fees during roadworks. It must protect the pedestrian

environment from encroachment by infrastructure for charging electric vehicles, which belongs instead on the carriageway. The standard should also incorporate a general presumption against pavement parking.

Once this standard is established, new designs must conform to it and be costed accordingly. But large sections of the existing pedestrian network can be expected to fall short. Authorities should therefore make it their long-term aim to bring their entire network up to standard and their Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans should set out prioritised lists of sections of the network for improvement.



We recommend the creation of a new Highways Act.



19. New standards for equity and engagement/consultation

Evidence provided by Wheels for Wellbeing and Transport for All drew attention to a tendency for transport/highway authorities to fail to take into account the needs of under-represented groups when designing interventions. This is almost never deliberate, but results from a tendency to prioritise the primary objective. For example, many low-traffic neighbourhoods improved accessibility for non-disabled people travelling on foot or cycle but at the same time reduced accessibility for wheelchair users by not providing drop kerbs. Whilst the Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) provide an essential backstop, a more positive approach to avoiding injustice is needed. We recommend a new standard be created to ensure authorities pay sufficient heed to issues of justice when planning to grow active travel. Such a standard would obviously look quite different to the infrastructure standards mentioned above but there are precedents: for example, Sustrans told us of the equity indicators developed by Oakland in California, which it uses to test the distributional effects of its policies. The standard would start with a truly inclusive approach to planning – authorities must go to the necessary lengths to bring under-represented communities into the conversation. Programme design must then respond to the barriers that are preventing people from using active travel. The standard

would stipulate a requirement to consider reparative actions where individuals or groups have been historically excluded from active travel, implying boosted budgets for certain projects and/or prioritising the correction of “holes” in the infrastructure network.

Also needed is a standard governing engagement and consultation (see Influencing attitudes and behaviour, below).

20. A new Highways Act

Whilst our focus in this inquiry has been investment, we have inevitably ranged beyond this because of the interdependencies between it and wider transport policy. And we accept the argument that a major reason for the historically poor provision for active travel is the lack of pressure on highway authorities to attend to walking and cycling. We therefore recommend the creation of a new Highways Act whose main purpose would be to require highway authorities to develop and manage their networks in accordance with the need to achieve the goals of environmental sustainability and improved public health. Specific to our emphasis on cycling and walking, the Act would impose on authorities a requirement to improve facilities for active travel as part of any change to the road network. We would also push for it to require highway authorities to contribute fully to the collective drive towards Net Zero in the transport sector.



Influencing attitudes and behaviour

Growth in active travel depends both on the creation of conducive environments and on people being willing to make journeys this way. Many of our recommendations address the first of these and, of course, conducive environments will have a direct effect on attitudes. But there is plenty of additional scope to influence attitudes. Living Streets told us of the success they have had with their Walk to School project, for example. And Dr David Ogilvie explained that evidence on the impact of a range of intervention types is getting stronger, so there is an increasing understanding of which non-infrastructure measures are likely to work best. But a great deal remains less well understood.

Another, crucial, aspect is the way in which projects are designed and delivered. As [the backlash against some schemes delivered during the pandemic showed](#), a failure to engage adequately and constructively with communities can hamper efforts to grow active travel.

Planning and delivery of active-travel interventions will need to display best practice in engagement and consultation.



21. Use best practice in project development and engagement to win hearts and minds

Given our increasingly good understanding of what works best in promoting active travel, transport/highway authorities should make best use of the evidence base when developing projects. This includes the selection of interventions, their detailed design and their phasing. For example, if an authority plans to introduce a charging scheme to promote modal shift, measures that improve the alternatives to driving should probably be introduced first.

Whilst the knowledge base is growing, many interventions continue to be used despite a lack of evidence about their impacts; and certain novel options are not used because it is not clear whether they will work. This is why we recommend the creation of a “what works?” fund (see Active Travel England, above).

Reflecting what has been learnt from the experience of the (Emergency) Active Travel Fund during the pandemic, the planning and delivery of active-travel interventions will need to display best practice in engagement

and consultation. For this reason, we are recommending the creation of a new standard (introduced above under Standards). A formal articulation of what is expected would enable active travel to lead the way in the transport sector. The standard would require authorities to make adequate efforts to involve local people and other interested parties in the planning process; to make the planning process truly accessible and equitable; and to demonstrate a genuine readiness to revise plans in light of stakeholder contributions, with co-design seen as the most desirable approach. Such a standard need be neither long nor detailed – the [International Association for Public Participation’s Core Values](#) would be a reasonable starting point.

Performance management

Performance in growing active travel can be expected to vary across authorities, reflecting factors ranging from corporate memory to political will. And it is very likely that some authorities' performance will place the achievement of their local active-travel targets at risk. The commitment in Gear Change and its update to withdraw funding from underperforming authorities was noted but our witnesses took a more conciliatory line: it made sense to "sin bin" councils in certain circumstances, Cycling UK told us, but these authorities needed to see a clear path out of the sin bin. Going further, Mark Frost saw nothing to be gained from a punitive approach, arguing that such measures will achieve little and will definitely not result in a reduction in carbon. We found this argument convincing and recommend a "no authority left behind" approach: the size of the climate challenge does not permit struggling authorities to be left to founder.

We recommend Active Travel England (ATE) take action to help improve the performance of authorities who are at risk of falling significantly short of their targets.

22. Intensive support for struggling authorities


Much as Ofsted intervenes with struggling schools, we recommend Active Travel England (ATE) take action to help improve the performance of authorities who are at risk of falling significantly short of their targets. The nature of this action will depend on the reasons for underperformance but may include the provision of expert assistance with the planning or programme-management process, or mentoring for elected members – this could include study tours to places such as Cambridge and Waltham Forest. We also recommend that ATE produce some short videos with active travel success stories from towns and cities across England, which will be aimed at both councillors and the general public.





Knowledge gaps

The oral and written evidence we received drew our attention to several significant knowledge gaps with respect to growing active travel and we therefore recommend below some essential research activities. Note that the ongoing task of building our understanding of “what works” in growing active travel is dealt with separately above (see Active Travel England).



Current measures of walking and cycling are helpful but lack important detail at the local level.

23. Obtain robust numbers to support future target- and budget-setting

Current measures of walking and cycling are helpful in aggregate but lack important detail at the local level. For example, Living Streets told us that it is good to have a measure of total walk stages but that it is important also to know who is making the trips. The National Audit Office made the more general point that the availability of good data is amongst the ingredients for a successful project. A serious attempt to grow active travel therefore needs to begin with an accurate baseline, providing insight into who uses active travel for which sorts of journeys. The growing diversity of sources of data means that this does not need to rely entirely on traditional counts or surveys as used to be the case. The funding to grow active travel needs to be consistent with the level of ambition (see Funding, above), but the investment required to achieve a given level of growth remains a subject of some speculation and is, of course, contingent upon a range of connected policies – the relative attractiveness of active travel would likely increase if national road pricing were in place, for example. Research is therefore also required to estimate the medium- and long-term spend necessary to

achieve a given growth target against a set of policy “scenarios”. These scenarios would represent a range of policy environments more or less conducive to active travel in terms of factors such as the cost and convenience of driving (including electric vehicles), and the quality and price of public transport.

24. Establish monitoring arrangements that will keep progress on track

As well as an accurate baseline, projects rely for their success on information that shows whether progress is on track, the National Audit Office told us. Efficient but accurate methods for monitoring progress will therefore be needed as investment in active travel ramps up. An adjunct to the work above on deriving robust numbers is the development of such a monitoring system, making the best use of the range of data sources available.

A more inclusive approach to growing active travel requires a richer understanding of the barriers faced by members of under-represented groups.



25. Seek appraisal methods consistent with growing active travel

Rather than having to navigate an appraisal process that seems intrinsically hostile to active travel, policy makers should benefit from appraisal tools that are aligned with the goals of net zero and major growth in active travel. Progress has been made in the development of the Active Mode Appraisal Toolkit (AMAT) but appraisal remains dominated by an economic paradigm that privileges speed. HM Treasury and Department for Transport officials would be charged with seeking revisions to Transport Analysis Guidance (TAG) to make it more consistent with policy imperatives.

26. Improve understanding of exclusion from active travel

A more inclusive approach to growing active travel requires a richer understanding of the barriers faced by members of under-represented groups. In particular, this understanding must move beyond a characterisation of a given group (women or disabled people, say) as homogeneous, instead appreciating the intersectional nature of the issue. This research project would be designed to capture the effect of policy and practice on a range of characteristics, including location, disability, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status and sexuality, to improve our understanding of who is excluded from active travel in England and why and which measures are most successful in counteracting this. Apart from raising awareness amongst policy makers, the research would inform the development of more inclusive *Active Travel Plans* and enable the setting of appropriate targets at the England level (see Targets, above).



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