

The background is a solid orange color with a repeating pattern of white icons representing various active travel modes: walking, cycling, pushing a stroller, using a wheelchair, and using a walker. The icons are scattered across the entire page.

# Active travel **BRIEFING**

**CEN Councillors: Active travel briefing**

*This is not intended to be an exhaustive briefing, but an overview of the key facts, figures and information that can help you to respond to the topic. This is written as if the reader is a new Councillor who does not have a background in climate policy. If you are interested in finding out more, please contact the useful organisations at the end.*

**Contents**

1. Key information
2. Top tips for improving active travel locally
3. Background to active travel
4. Background to walking and cycling
5. Case studies
6. Communicating the Conservative case
7. Other useful organisations

**1. Key information**

**Documents:**

**Gear Change:** Published in July 2020, the report sets out to empower and encourage local authorities to improve walking and cycling infrastructure with **a new £2 billion pot of funding for towns and cities**. It sets out the national government objectives to:

- Boost uptake in the demographics where active travel rates are currently low, setting out how to give these residents more confidence to walk and cycle.
- Create a national e-bike scheme. This will help the elderly, or those who have injuries that prevent them from cycling. It can also be useful for those making longer journeys.
- End funding for cosmetic road changes e.g. pathway paintings to create cycle paths. Cycle provisions must not be shared with pedestrians.
- Improve the [National Cycle Network](#) to make it direct, free of obstacles and weatherproof.
- Give the under-confident confidence by strengthening the highway code to protect both pedestrians and cyclists, improving legal protections for vulnerable road users, raising safety standards on lorries, and working with the police and retailers to tackle bike theft.
- Work to make public transport complement active travel networks.
- Improve infrastructure to encourage uptake in cycling - encouraging installation of safe cycling racks, encouraging employers to have shower facilities, working with bike manufacturers to introduce mandatory numbering for bikes, and expanding cycling proficiency courses.
- Encourage GPs to prescribe cycling, with patients able to access bikes through their local surgery.

**Investing in Cycling and Walking - The Economic Case for Action:** Published in 2015.

**Local Transport Note 1/20 - Cycle Infrastructure Design**: Published in July 2020 it sets out traffic management guidance for local authorities.

**Cycling and Walking Strategy 2017**: Published in 2017 it sets out the Government's ambition to "make cycling and walking the natural choices for shorter journeys, or a part of a longer journey".

**Transport Decarbonisation Plan**: Set to be published in June 2021 it will set out the challenges and next steps for transport decarbonisation.

### Glossary:

- **Low Traffic Neighborhoods (LTNs)**: Traffic is reduced by using temporary or permanent barriers (e.g. planters or bollards). Minimising the amount of traffic that comes from vehicles using the streets to get to another destination. Private vehicles still have easy access to all homes and businesses.
- **School Streets**: Temporarily closing the roads around schools at drop-off and pick-up times to everyone except pedestrians and cyclists. Barriers or cameras can be used to enforce it. Residents, local businesses and blue badge holders are able to apply for exemptions.

## 2. **Top tips for improving active travel locally**

1. **Be aware of the Government's environmental ambitions**: The Government's Build Back Better Plan stresses how our transition to net zero is critical to improve our adaptability and resilience. The Government first set out their ambition in the 2017 Walking and Cycling Strategy to double the number of journeys made by bike in 2035, and make walking and cycling the natural choice for shorter journeys or a part of longer journeys.
2. **Be aware of the role of the National Planning Policy Framework**: The NPPF sets out how planning policies should encourage and promote walking, cycling and public transport with high quality networks and supporting facilities. *See paragraphs 81, 102 and 104 in particular.*
3. **Be aware of available funding pots and what you need to do to qualify**: Subscribing to the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (formerly Office for Low Emission Vehicles) will keep you up-to-date with new funding pots for local authorities from the government. It sets out the overall strategy, how to constantly improve your networks and how to apply for funding.
4. **Make the case for the wider public to get cycling and walking, not just 'men in lycra'!** The Government's ambition is to increase the confidence of groups who are typically not cyclists or walkers to choose active travel to commute and for leisure. The Government is committed to increasing cycling and walking and making our roads safer for those who walk or cycle from aged 8 to 80 and beyond.
5. **Communication, consultation and choice**: For residents to support and use new active travel networks, it's important that they feel included in the process instead of strategies being thrust upon them. Making sure proposals offer choice rather than appearing to just penalise drivers is key. Here's how to do that:

- a. **Consult in two ways:** The consultation process needs to take a twin approach. First, consult with the entire neighbourhood about the appetite for traffic management or a cycle network. Second, consult with cyclists and potential future cyclists about your plans.
  - b. **After comprehensive consultation, signpost clearly:** To avoid backlash it's important to provide clear signposting. [The Gear Change Report](#) requires new walking and cycle paths to have clear signposting and routes mapped out. Where there are cameras rather than physical enforcement of new rules like School Streets and low traffic neighbourhoods, signposting is necessary to avoid residents accruing fines and becoming frustrated.
  - c. **Present traffic management schemes as widening choice:** Rather than presenting changes as stopping people from using their cars, it can be useful to show the opportunities for everyone of all ages and abilities to use active travel. Ensure paths are connected up, lead somewhere and are supported by accessible public transport links.
6. **Be aware of Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004:** In the Gear Change Report the Government has pledged to commence the remaining elements of this legislation. This will allow local authorities, rather than police forces, to control enforcement against moving traffic offences, such as disregarding one way systems or mandatory cycle lanes. This change has already been introduced in London.
  7. **The simplest, cheapest interventions can be the most effective:** Creating direct paths for cycling could entail closing roads to through traffic to avoid 'rat running' where motorists use residential streets as a shortcut. Councils in London and Wales may use automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) cameras to enforce School Streets. Other councils are placing bollards or temporary barriers to block access to through traffic.
  8. **Cycling infrastructure must be coherent, direct, safe, comfortable and attractive:** The funding from the [Gear Change Report](#) will only be given to active travel networks which flow, are direct and logical. Active Travel England is an inspectorate and funding body that will ensure that local authority projects fulfil the standards set by the government. See [pages 40-48](#) the summary of principles for cycle infrastructure design. The key design principles [set out on p.21 include:](#)
    1. Cyclists must be separated from volume traffic, both at junctions and on the stretches of road between them.
    2. Cyclists must be separated from pedestrians.
    3. Cyclists must be treated as vehicles, not pedestrians.
    4. Routes must join together; isolated stretches of good provision are of little value.
    5. Routes must feel direct, logical and be intuitively understandable by all road users.
    6. Routes and schemes must take account of how users actually behave.
    7. Purely cosmetic alterations should be avoided.
    8. Barriers, such as chicane barriers and dismount signs, should be avoided.
    9. Routes should be designed only by those who have experienced the road on a bike.

### 3. Background to walking and cycling

#### **Context for net zero:**

- Boosting the number of cyclists and pedestrians is a good way to cut emissions in the transport sector, which [now accounts for around a fifth of all UK greenhouse gas emissions](#).
- The [Climate Change Committee](#) (CCC) advises that the Government must set out the numerous benefits of active travel and public transport to cut heavy reliance on cars. They identify the following benefits: better health from exercise, improved air quality and less noise pollution.
- The CCC, in their [“The UK’s contribution to stopping global warming”](#) report, set out that our current net zero plans will require 10% [fewer journeys to be completed in private](#) vehicles.

#### **Statistics:**

**Walking and cycling** (source: Department for Transport - [Walking and Cycling Statistics 2019](#); 2020 statistics will be released in July 2021 [here](#)):

- [According to the Gear Change Report \(p.11\)](#) in England 58% of all journeys are under five miles, and in urban areas, 40% of journeys are under two miles - these are suited to walking or cycling. But only 2% of journeys are cycled in the UK.
- However in the Netherlands, where around €30 is spent per year per person on cycling and associated infrastructure, a quarter of journeys are cycled.
- In 2018, 27% of all trips were made by walking - covering 3% of all distance travelled.
- Men cycle more often and further than women, and adults in their forties cycle the most.
- Three fifths of people don’t have access to a bicycle, while two thirds of adults feel that it is too dangerous to cycle on the roads.
- Active travel policy interventions may have prioritised improvements to cycle infrastructure over walking. Cycling in London has increased by 131% since 2000, whereas walking trips have only increased in line with population growth.

#### **Health benefits:**

- Research by Glasgow University shows that [adopting an active commute is one of the most effective health interventions](#). Cycling to work is associated with a 46% lower risk of heart disease, 41% lower risk of premature death, stroke, type 2 diabetes and a variety of cancers compared to a non-active commute. There are also [significant benefits to quality of life](#) and mental health and reducing absenteeism at work.
- [Active school travel](#) can play a greater role in preventing childhood obesity and supporting children incorporate everyday exercise to maintain a healthier weight.
- There are between [28,000 and 36,000 deaths](#) a year attributed to long-term exposure of air pollution.
- Air pollution causes six million sick days and the [total NHS and social care](#) cost due to fine particulate matter and NO2 emissions was estimated at £42 million in 2017.
- The wider problem of physical inactivity is estimated to cost the NHS [nearly £1 billion per year](#).

**Clean air benefits:**

- 45% of particulate matter comes from tyre and brake wear – so even if we switched all vehicles to electric, we'd still have a damaging amount of very fine dust as a result of traffic.
- Introducing School Streets have been shown to [cut nitrogen dioxide emissions by 23%](#) outside schools during the busiest times, helping to protect children's lungs.

**Economic benefits:**

- The Department for Transport has assessed investment in [cycling to be very good value for money](#), as there are significant health benefits and lower costs to the NHS,
- Sustrans' '[Societal Gain Model](#)' estimates a net benefit of 67p to society for every mile cycled rather than driven.

**Levelling up:**

- The Government is due to publish their 'Levelling Up' White Paper later in 2021. The [Levelling Up Prospectus](#) released in March 2021 begins to lay out the Government's vision, which includes how to transform the way we travel locally.
- [All areas of the UK are able to access the fund](#). The number and type of bids you can apply for depends on the tier of government you are applying from.
- As a part of the £100 billion capital expenditure fund announced by the Chancellor in the 2020 Autumn Spending Review, in 2021-2022 the government will invest in local infrastructure projects that have a visible impact on people and their communities and that are aligned with the Government's wider net zero ambitions.
- The Levelling Up Prospectus sets out how active travel is important for the regeneration of towns and cities:
  - In England, 48% of households in the lowest income quartile do not have access to a car. Widening active travel network availability widens access to towns and cities for these residents.
  - The study conducted on page 9 of the Gear Change Report sets out that well placed active travel networks can [increase footfall on high streets by 40%](#).
- The Government will encourage County Councils with transport powers to submit one transport bid to the Levelling Up Fund, focussing on public transport and active travel.
- The first round of funding of the Levelling Up Fund will include smaller transport projects that align with the government's net zero and environmental ambitions.

**Impact of lockdown:**

- According to the Department for Transport, from when the first 'Stay at Home' guidance was issued, [nationally private car usage fell by 75%](#).
- During the same time, [Transport Focus reported an increase](#) in average cycling rates by 35% in London and 50% in the South East.

- Strava, an exercise tracking app, believes that these increases were in part due to [women having more confidence](#) to cycle as there was less traffic on the roads.
- As lockdown eased in May and June 2020, 39% of people reported walking more and 38% reported cycling more than before the pandemic. Looking forward to after restrictions, [94% thought they would walk and cycle more](#).
- All this demonstrates that there is an enthusiasm for cycling more if the conditions are right.

### **3. Background to walking, cycling, e-bikes and scooting**

#### **Walking:**

- In Technical Guidance for the [Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans](#), the Government sets out that local authorities must examine their current active travel provision and determine the improvements needed to increase uptake by considering routes typically taken by residents.

#### **E-bikes:**

- The [current law surrounding e-bikes stipulates](#) that they can be ridden in the same places that pedal-bikes are allowed. They must not exceed 250 watts and 15.5mph to be treated the same as a pedal cycle. Riders must be over the age of 14.
- [E-bikes have been shown to be helpful](#) for groups who are currently unlikely to take up cycling or an active commute. The motor supports those with disabilities, injuries, or who are road nervous or live in rural or hilly areas.
- [Research by Cycling UK](#) on e-bikes has found:
  - They make longer distances more manageable than when using a regular bike.
  - E-bike users report higher levels of travel satisfaction than car users.
  - E-bike users are no more likely to be involved in a crash than pedal cyclists.
  - E-bike users over the age of 50 have reported they help them cope with the physical ailments that make normal cycling challenging.
  - E-bikes provide moderate intensity exercise, with more exertion than walking.
- Criticisms of e-bike subsidies:
  - Subsidies for e-bike schemes may just make them more easily accessible for wealthier residents, whilst remaining unattainable for lower income residents who would likely benefit most from easily-accessible emission-free transport. E-bikes have high upfront costs and can be difficult to store.
  - **Creating an e-bike scheme similar to the Santander or Boris bikes in London means they could be easily accessible to all residents.** In Copenhagen, the Mayor has collaborated with the not for profit [Bycyklen](#). By receiving subsidies to kickstart the rollout of e-bikes for commuters, the bikes are docked at train stations around the city. One hour cycling can cost as little as £2.64.



#### **E-scooters:**

- E-scooters are increasingly popular as a mode of travel for local journeys. However, the UK remains the only major European economy where e-scooters are banned from use apart from on private land.
- The [Department for Transport has commissioned several 12 month trials](#) for e-scooters, which were initially expedited and expanded due to the first COVID-19 outbreak. With favourable feedback so far, local authorities have started to establish partnerships with operators.
- With the trials ending in November 2021 at the latest, the data will give an indication of safety outcomes, interactions and effects on other road users, public perception and overall costs and benefits to society.
- E-scooters have a risk of community opposition on the grounds of safety, especially of those who are elderly, blind or otherwise vulnerable. So care should be taken to listen to feedback, show that you are doing so, and implement changes where necessary.

#### **4. Case studies**

##### **Walking:**

- [The Canal and River Trust](#) have 2,000 miles of interlinked canal footpath network, which provides largely flat, traffic free walking routes. The routes are suitable for all levels of walkers.
- In areas where the then Mayor of London Boris Johnson [introduced Mini-Hollands](#), a scheme to build networks of segregated cycle lanes, traffic calming measures and improved safety measures at junctions to encourage a shift to more active travel, walking increased by 13%.
- [Kensington and Chelsea School Streets](#) - In the RBKC, the Conservative council have introduced School Streets outside several schools to encourage walking, cycling, and scooting to school. Initial feedback from studies across London suggest that nitrogen dioxide levels fell by up to 23% and the schemes were strongly supported by parents.

##### **Cycling:**

- [Starley Network](#) - West Midlands Combined Authority alongside the Mayor Andy Street is delivering a 500-mile connected network of cycle routes across the West Midlands. Funded through the Active Travel Fund, local authorities worked together to map out a strategic route across the region. All routes are either away from any traffic highway, or within roads but segregated from traffic. This runs alongside a new bike hire scheme to serve the region and a series of active travel routes that are complemented by a tram and bus network alongside.
- [Mini Holland](#) - Then Mayor of London Boris Johnson launched the £100 million fund for outer boroughs to bid for funding as part of his Healthy Streets Campaign. The fund created a network of segregated cycle paths and pedestrianisation across town centres.
- [Cake Escape, Essex](#) - Cafés throughout Essex joined the Cake Escape project to encourage cycling around the county. Using a loyalty card, participants cycle to any of the cycle cafés signed up to the project and earn a reward stamp at the till after making a purchase. After four stamps on the loyalty



card, you receive a free slice of cake. The scheme is designed to encourage residents to explore local café culture, exercise and the countryside.

- [Suffolk County Council](#) - The Conservative-controlled council used the government's Active Travel Fund to install new cycling parking stands and plan to produce a map of the cycle routes around the town and the surrounding countryside. In line with the Department for Transport guidelines, the council is delivering a raft of measures to encourage active travel. This includes installing cycle lanes, closing off areas to motorised vehicles and providing safe crossing points for cyclists and pedestrians. [More here](#).
- [Leamington & Warwick](#) - Conservatives in local government are building continuous cycle routes between local communities to encourage people out of cars. They are also rolling out 20mph zones to tackle air pollution and exploring the installation of 'living walls'.

#### E-scooting:

- Conservative-run [Redditch Borough Council is running an e-scooter trial](#), one of the first in the country, across their town centre as part of the Department for Transport's e-scooter trials. Launched in September 2020, the trial was expanded in May 2021 to meet the increasing demand. The trial has shown that e-scooting is both popular and a viable alternative to driving as journey time is shorter compared to walking.

#### 5. Communicating the Conservative case

- Communication with residents is key, especially when implementing traffic management schemes. The Government has stressed that *local authorities must engage and consult with residents before implementing changes*.
- Active travel infrastructure can take some adjustment, however, once implemented councillors in areas with successful rollout have found strategic methods to engage with residents on them:
  - Using active travel yourself: Being seen around the local area on a regular basis commuting on a bike opens up the opportunity to connect with residents as it is a more sociable form of transport and speak about issues in your capacity as a councillor.
  - Social media: Using social media can be useful to open up discussion with local residents and showcase yourself using active travel.
- **Time and efficiency.** Putting forward both the cost and time benefits of active travel can be popular with Conservative voters.
  - As mentioned above, active travel can reduce pressure on the NHS.
  - Active travel is an efficient method of helping those suffering from low-lying depressive symptoms and general anxiety and helps reduce the need for further medical intervention.
  - Cycling is often faster than the car for getting from A to B, which can mean improved productivity.

- **Supporting the high street and small businesses.** As mentioned above, more active travel can increase footfall if designed correctly. As we build back better, tap into the desire to support local firms as they recover from the pandemic.
- **Creating a better community.** Fewer cars on the road creates more space for those who need it most and means safer, quieter and more peaceful residential roads. There are particular benefits for children's safety. Instead of framing active travel infrastructure as a restriction on driving, presenting it as an opportunity to create a more beautiful place to live, work and visit can be more appealing to residents.
- **Reducing undesirable through-traffic.** Active travel infrastructure that prevents through-traffic can result in a safer street space with considerably slower traffic, no rat running and a stronger sense of community.
- **Benefiting childhood development.** There are a number of long and short term benefits for children from making active travel more accessible.
  - Helping children incorporate exercise into their daily lives at an early stage is an effective way to reduce childhood obesity and improve mental wellbeing.
  - Children's behaviour and concentration can improve as a result of regular walking, supporting schools to achieve the best learning outcomes.
  - There is significant science behind the detrimental effect of the illegal levels of air pollution to children's [brain and lung development](#).
- **Access to nature.** Polling [shows that the public want access to nature to be a priority](#) as we recover from the pandemic. Nine in ten people surveyed by Natural England considered access to nature as important for their mental health and well-being. In addition, the recent [Dasgupta Review](#) commissioned by the Treasury puts forward the economic reasoning for supporting improving access to nature. Active travel often compliments access to nature as active travel paths are a convenient way to travel through nature daily. This can be a strategic way to encourage residents to commute by foot or bike as it gives them greater travel satisfaction than driving and getting stuck in traffic.

## 6. Other useful organisations

[Sustrans](#) (a walking and cycling charity)

[Cycling UK](#)

[Office for Zero Emission Vehicles](#)

[Living Streets](#)

[Conservative Friends of Cycling](#)

[Wheels for Wellbeing](#)

[Mums for Lungs](#)



**CONSERVATIVE  
ENVIRONMENT  
NETWORK**