CONSERVATIVE
ENVIRONMENT
NETWORK

CEN briefing: Active travel

Background:

- **Making it easier for people of ages to walk and cycle encourages more healthy living:** Cycling has been rising in popularity since 1990, with a 30 year peak following the pandemic. However, cycling rates are a fraction of what they were in the 1950s as cars have become more affordable and convenient. This has increased the number of us living sedentary lifestyles — causing more cases of obesity, cancer, heart disease, hypertension, high cholesterol, and diabetes, not to mention worsening air pollution.

- **Public transport and active travel infrastructure can keep residents without a car connected:** Teenagers, the elderly, and job seekers often do not have access to a private vehicle. Ensuring that they can stay connected with friends, family, amenities, and employment through reliable public transport and safe active travel infrastructure can give them the dignity and independence as they do have to rely on relatives to get around or face social isolation.

- **When properly consulted on, measures to encourage active travel and public transport ultimately cut congestion:** Twenty five percent of journeys are under one mile and 72% of journeys are under five miles, many of these, but not all, would be suited to walking, cycling, or public transport. However, even schemes that have been thoroughly consulted on can see an adjustment period where residents adapt how they take their children to school, go to the shops, or go into town, before active travel alternatives become normalised. Feedback from successfully implemented school street schemes has seen a reduction in tailpipe emissions by 23%.

Government action:

- **Since 2020, the government has increased funding for new active travel infrastructure:** The government has spent a record £2.3 billion in improving active travel. This has included funding towards the Active Travel Fund for local authorities, funding for new segregated cycle lanes, bike maintenance schemes, Bikeability programmes for children, and a walk to school campaign.

- **In 2020, the government set up Active Travel England (ATE) to support delivering its target of 50% of journeys in towns and cities being walked or cycled:** ATE is a funding body and inspectorate that seeks to make walking and cycling the first choice for everyone. ATE acts as an inspectorate for local authorities and developers for new infrastructure and it has the right to refuse applications that do not meet standards set out by DfT. Since its inception in August 2022, it has appointed Chris Boardman MBE as its commissioner and

has overseen a 14% improvement in the number of cycle scheme designs submitted by local authorities that complies with national guidance.

- **In 2021, the government has encouraged more children to walk or cycle to school with the introduction of "school streets":** In 2021 the government commenced the remaining legislation of part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004, giving local authorities, rather than busy police forces, the power to control enforcement against moving traffic offences such as disregarding one way systems or mandatory cycle lanes. This has also enabled local authorities to choose where to introduce "school streets" to encourage more children to walk or cycle to school.

- **The government made changes to the Highway Code to give greater protections to pedestrians and cyclists:** The changes to the code include the introduction of the 'hierarchy of road users' that places those road users most at risk in the event of a collision at the top. The new measures also give greater clarification on overtaking cyclists and using shared road space and pavements.

- **The Cycle to Work scheme was expanded in 2019 to include the purchase of e-bikes:** Cycle to Work is tax exemption which allows employers to loan bikes and safety equipment to employees as a tax free benefit. In 2019, the government extended this to include e-bikes with a value of over £1,000, so that those less sure about their fitness and road awareness can still confidently cycle to work.