

ACTIVE TRAVEL

JOE IRVIN

Chief Executive
of Living Streets

"Walking is one of the best ways to keep active. It's free, accessible to all and can be easily slotted into daily lives as part of journeys to school, work and the shops. It benefits our mental health and can prevent chronic illnesses like heart disease and diabetes. When we walk it's good for us, our environment and our local economy. When we don't, our sedentary lifestyle creates isolation and an increasing strain on the NHS. It's great that this report is highlighting the vital role active travel plays in promoting physical activity."



Fig 10.

MOVING FORWARD

Local transport authorities should launch pilot schemes in collaboration with employers to establish an evidence-based points-based system to increase the take-up of active journeys.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, the number of active trips has been steadily declining – contributing to the increasingly sedentary lifestyles that have developed for adults and children in Britain.²⁴

Active travel, for a great number of people, represents one of the easiest and most accessible ways of keeping an active lifestyle. Walking and cycling have the potential to reap huge benefits socially and in terms of healthcare outcomes, making it an essential part of any overarching activity strategy.

The Welsh Government has already pioneered the first Active Travel Act in Europe, emulating small-scale international examples from cities in Northern Europe that show putting walking and cycling at the heart of local transport decisions – and creating an environment that supports active travel – not only brings substantial socioeconomic benefits, but also impacts the broader wellbeing of society.²⁵

A small number of low-cost steps can improve the safety, accessibility and attractiveness of the local environment and engage even the most inactive groups – across income, age and gender – to incorporate activity into their everyday lives. Moreover, in places where more people walk and fewer people drive, there are improvements in air quality and reductions in social isolation – both of which bring additional health benefits.

²⁴ Department for Transport, National Travel Survey: England 2014, Office for National Statistics, 2 September 2015, <https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/457752/nts2014-01.pdf>, [accessed 04/09/2015]

²⁵ Cycling Embassy of Denmark, Copenhagen City of Cyclists: The Bicycle Account 2014, (May 2015), <<http://www.cycling-embassy.dk/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Copenhagens-Bicycle-Account-2014.pdf>>, [accessed 23/09/15]

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1 The government has committed for the first time to set out a long term plan for improving walking and cycling in a Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS). The strategy provides a unique opportunity for government to make walking and cycling the natural choice for regular journeys, bringing with it huge benefits to the nations transport and health.

>> Strategic, long term investment in walking and cycling is needed to meet existing policy commitments, in particular to double the number of journeys cycled and reverse the decline in children walking to school. The government must now ensure the necessary funds are available across the relevant government departments to fund an effective Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy. These funds should be used not only for infrastructure programmes but also for behaviour change interventions that provide support and motivation to inactive people, encouraging them to build activity into their everyday lives. Evidence has shown that motivational interviewing programmes lead to increased levels of walking so they should play an integral part in this strategy.

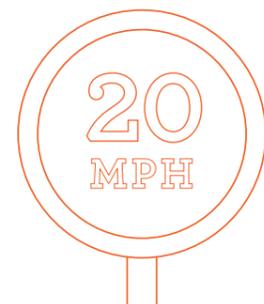
2 Making walking and cycling the natural choice for every day, short journeys can improve the health and wellbeing of entire communities and radically improve their social and health outcomes. Local authorities should continually identify areas and opportunities to encourage active travel and implement evidence-based solutions to promote it.

>> In line with the recommendations from Public Health England's *Everybody Active, Every Day*, Government should examine all the factors and behaviours influencing active travel and, as part of a wider focus on physical activity promotion, resource local authorities to build new active travel infrastructures and improve existing ones.

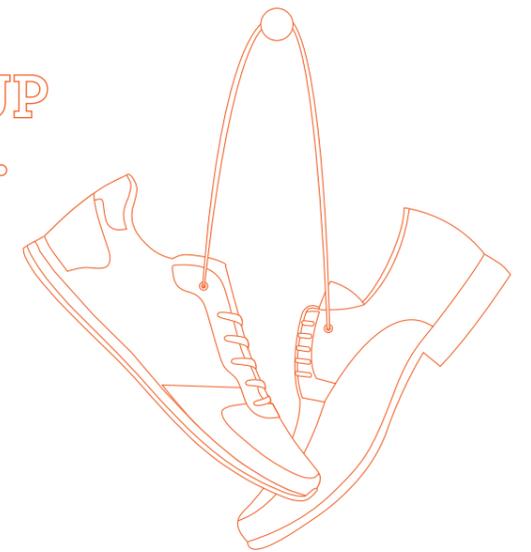
>> Joint Strategic Needs Assessments should analyse the opportunities and barriers to active travel in the local area and highlight improvements which can be made, as well as specific measures to engage the least active groups and those suffering the worst walking conditions. Building upon the pioneering Active Travel Act (Wales) 2013, local authorities should publish community active travel route maps every year with a variety of routes based on traffic usage to ensure cycling is accessible to everyone.

>> Local authorities should support the growth programmes proven to be effective in encouraging active travel, including Living Streets' *Walk to School* programme and the Sustrans' *National Cycle Network* and seek to disseminate information on usage of these programmes via community outlets as well as sign-posting through public sector employees.

>> Feeling safe in an environment is one of the single biggest factors influencing active travel. A 20mph speed limit should be introduced on streets where people live, work and shop to create an environment where people feel safe and confident to walk or cycle.



LOCAL TRANSPORT AUTHORITIES SHOULD LAUNCH PILOT SCHEMES IN COLLABORATION WITH EMPLOYERS TO INCREASE THE TAKE-UP OF ACTIVE JOURNEYS.



3 Government and local authorities should collaborate with schools, workplaces, the physical activity sector and technology providers to champion active commuting.

>> To encourage children and parents to take up walking, the Department for Transport and local authorities should support and incentivise schools to implement and deliver walk to school programmes, as well as develop and adopt other evidence-based strategies, including the implementation of car-free zones.

>> In line with recommendations from the London Health Commission, local transport authorities, such as Transport for London, should launch pilot schemes in collaboration with employers to establish an evidence-based points-based system to increase the take-up of active journeys.

>> The active travel and health communities should work closely with existing innovative technology providers and new start-ups that have the potential to encourage more people to make active journeys, particularly through collaborating to share data on the most effective methods of engagement.

>> Existing technology platforms should be used to track, measure and evaluate current active travel schemes.