



Department
for Transport

Gear Change: One Year On



Cover images (*clockwise from top left*) courtesy of:
Wheels for Wellbeing/Transport for London,
Bikeability Trust,
Living Streets,
Bikeability Trust,
Peter Kindersley.



Department
for Transport

Gear Change: One Year On

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Prime Minister's Foreword



About this time last year, I promised to kick off the most radical change to our city streets since the arrival of mass motoring. Perhaps rather quickly for a government promise, we seem to be achieving it.

Since last year, cycling in England has risen by 46 per cent – the greatest increase in postwar history. Cycling has increased by more in this one single year than it did over the whole of the previous 20 years. The roads are festooned with people wearing colours not found in nature. Hundreds of new schemes have created safe space for people to cycle and walk, supported pubs and restaurants that might otherwise have closed, and allowed us to get the exercise we need. For decades we mourned that children no longer played in the street. Now once again, in some places, they do.

But these achievements are not nailed on yet. So this document seeks not just to celebrate the success of our policies – but to repeat our commitment to them, to bust some of the myths about them, and to show how we will do more.

Spending on active travel this year will significantly increase – from the £257 million announced at last November's Spending Review to £338m, a rise of a third. We will use the money to invest in more low-traffic neighbourhoods and protected cycle lanes. And we will upgrade the National Cycle Network.

In the decade to 2020, road traffic in urban areas grew by a quarter, and on side streets by a third. It is forecast to rise even more in the next decade. There are only a few ways to deal with this. The best way is to make better use of the roads we've already got, by encouraging vehicles such as cycles and buses that take up less space per passenger.

I know many people think that cycling and walking schemes simply increase car traffic on other roads. But there is now increasing evidence that they do not. We sometimes think of traffic as like water: if you block a stream in one place, it will find the next easiest way. Of course some journeys by car are essential, but traffic is not a force of nature. It is a product of people's choices. If you make it easier and safer to walk and cycle, more people choose to walk and cycle instead of driving, and the traffic falls overall.

I support councils, of all parties, which are trying to promote cycling and bus use. And if you are going to oppose these schemes, you must tell us what your alternative is, because trying to squeeze more cars and delivery vans on the same roads and hoping for the best is not going to work.

And as the benefits of schemes increase over time, what opposition there is falls further. That is why schemes must be in place long enough for their benefits and disbenefits to be properly evidenced.

Almost exactly six years ago, in east London, we began the first of the transformational low-traffic neighbourhood schemes I funded as mayor. There was intense controversy: hundreds of protestors carried a golden coffin to symbolise the “death” we were supposedly causing to the local shops. But the council stuck it out, thank goodness. Now, the local shops and cafes have never been busier, air quality is up, opposition to the LTN has evaporated, and so has some of the traffic.

That is the future I want to see for a lot more places, and this plan will help achieve it.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Boris Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

**Boris Johnson,
Prime Minister**



PLEASE KEEP A SAFE DISTANCE OF 2 METRES ⚠️ ⚠️ PLEASE KEEP A SAFE DISTANCE OF 2 METRES ⚠️

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Insurance and support package for new cyclists

If you've recently discovered the joys of cycling or are planning to take the plunge, we're here to help you get started. Our Back in the Saddle package includes everything you need to get on the road safely and confidently.

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- 12 months' theft insurance
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- 12 months' damage to your equipment
- 12 months' damage to your gear

cyclinguk.org/back-in-your-life

UP

cycling

Introduction

England's urban roads are filling up. Between 2010 and 2019, traffic in urban areas grew by a quarter – and on side streets, often unsuitable for volume traffic, it grew by a third. Ride-hailing services, more delivery traffic, and apps which direct people down rat-runs have all played their part.

Even before the pandemic, road traffic was predicted to grow up to 51% by 2050¹. Trends since, with the increase in delivery traffic and the hopefully temporary move away from public transport, are likely to further increase road demand in the short term. This may not be workable for much longer, at least in inner cities.

There are only a few ways to deal with the enormous growth in demand for roadspace. The first way is building more roads in urban areas, which is politically and practically difficult in most cities, with little public support for the demolitions of private property which would be required. There is also evidence that it does not work, simply attracting more traffic.

The second way is building more railways, which takes decades. The third is some form of congestion charging, as in London. The fourth is to make better use of the roads we already have, by encouraging vehicles such as buses and bikes that take up less space per passenger. In the short and medium term, this is the only way to keep the roads moving for the traffic that most needs to use them.

Even before the dramatic rises of the last year, active travel played an important role. Across England, before the pandemic, 28 per cent of all trips were made by walking and cycling². In the 2019 morning rush hours (7–10am), cycles made up about a third of the vehicles on the roads of central London, and up to 70 per cent on some main roads. London's new Blackfriars Bridge cycle track carried an average of 26 cyclists per minute, and the new Embankment cycle track – which takes up one lane of this four-lane road – moved more traffic than the other three lanes put together. Across London as a whole, there were around 700,000 cycle journeys in a full day, equivalent to about a quarter of the passengers on the entire Underground³.

Cycling was mass transit in other places too. In Greater Manchester, as many cycle journeys were made each day as on the region's Metrolink tram system.

Cambridge had among the highest levels of cycling in the English-speaking world, with 55% of residents cycling at least once a week, and 25% of people travelling by bike at least five times per week⁴.

Most cycling and walking journeys are short – but so are many car journeys. In 2019 around 58% of car trips were less than 5 miles and around a quarter were less than 2 miles. Evidence from the cycling and walking schemes installed in the last year, and before, is that making it easier and safer to walk or cycle increases the number of people walking and cycling, and reduces the number of people making short car journeys, meaning that traffic falls overall. It might not feel like it at first – and it sometimes happens gradually. But the evidence shows that, over time, it does happen. And the longer a scheme is in effect, the more it happens.

That is why, over time, cycling and walking schemes help all road users, not just cyclists or pedestrians. Everyone who walks or uses a cycle instead of a car is freeing space on the roads for others who still drive. Everyone who cycles or walks instead of driving improves not just their own health, but everybody else's health, by reducing pollution, traffic danger and noise. Low-traffic streets are better places to be, to shop and to eat. Taking away cars during the pandemic has delivered significant boosts to shops, restaurants and other businesses.

The debate about roads space is sometimes conducted on the assumption that everyone drives. But across the country, a quarter of all households have no car or van. In cities such as Newcastle, Nottingham, Hull, Manchester and Liverpool, 40 to 50 per cent of all households do not have cars. In inner London, it is 55 to 65 per cent. These figures are for households: the proportion of people without full-time access to a car or van is greater still⁵.

The pandemic has changed how we travel, but we need to change more. Without more people walking, cycling and going by bus, our cities and larger towns will become less and less pleasant, and harder and harder to move around.



Courtesy of: Sustrans

A year of achievement

In May 2020, we announced £2bn of new money for cycling and walking over the course of this parliament, a sixfold increase in the amount of dedicated funding for cycling and walking. During 2020/21, we provided over £320m to local authorities through a new Active Travel Fund, and to Transport for London through the first two tranches of its funding deal, to reallocate road space and create dedicated walking and cycling routes. In 2021/22, we will invest a total of £338 million in active travel, an increase of around a third from what we announced at the Spending Review in November 2020, reflecting the Government's ongoing commitment to this agenda. In addition to this, we have allocated £100m more for active travel in the third and latest tranche of the TfL funding deal.

All this comes on top of significant investment in walking and cycling that has already been announced.



Also in May 2020, we published new statutory Network Management Duty guidance⁶ requiring local authorities in urban areas to reallocate roadspace for cycling and walking. In July, we published *Gear Change*⁷, our ambitious cycling and walking plan for how the money will be spent, and *Local Transport Note 1/20*⁸, our detailed design guidance requiring much higher standards for cycling schemes.

Significant delivery of the spending commitments and promises made in *Gear Change* has occurred during the last year, and others will be fulfilled in this document.

We have delivered:

- Hundreds of school streets, where streets by a school are closed to motor traffic at peak times. These have dramatically improved pollution and safety risks to pupils and led to significant rises in the number of children cycling and walking to school. According to Hackney Council, which pioneered the concept, its first four school streets reduced traffic around the schools concerned by an average of 68 per cent, cut vehicle emissions at the schools by 74 per cent and increased the number of children cycling to school by 51 per cent.
- At least 150 Low Traffic Neighbourhoods to add to the thousands already in existence, where side streets are closed to through traffic to prevent rat-running. Substantial rises in walking and cycling have taken place in these areas and traffic has been reduced.
- More than 100 miles of new segregated cycle lanes on main roads, including around 60 miles in London alone.





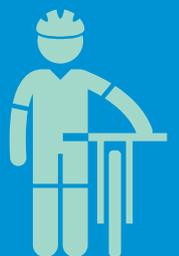
Courtesy of: Peter Kindersley

Over the course of **2020/21** the Government has provided:

Over **£220 million** to local authorities through two tranches of the Active Travel Fund to reallocate road space and create dedicated routes for cycling and walking⁹.



Over **£100 million** to Transport for London to enable it to deliver the London Streetspace programme, which has seen over 60 miles of new segregated cycle lanes on the capital's streets, as well as to support a programme of adult cycle training.



£20 million of revenue funding to local authorities to allow them to deliver a wide range of programmes to get more people walking and cycling and access work and educational opportunities through the Access Fund.





Over **£20 million** to the Fix Your Bike voucher scheme and to the pop-up “Dr Bike” cycle maintenance facilities.



£13 million to support the Bikeability programme to teach children to cycle confidently and safely on the road.

£2 million to Cycling UK for the Big Bike Revival campaign, to help more people get cycling, particularly those from disadvantaged groups and from groups less likely to cycle.



£2 million to Living Streets for the “Walk to School” outreach campaign to get more children walking to school as schools reopened.

Further funding from wider Government transport, health and growth initiatives, such as the Transforming Cities Fund and Sport England’s Local Delivery Pilots.



Helped by these measures and by the reduction in traffic brought about by the pandemic, the sale and use of cycles has boomed in a way not seen in almost a century.

Retail cycle spending rose by 45 per cent in 2020 – which was the first year in history that people bought more than £1bn worth of cycles. Including maintenance, parts and accessories, the total value of the retail market was £2.31bn¹⁰. The chief executive of the country's largest cycle retailer, Halfords, said that despite this growth the company's surveys found that a further 37 per cent of UK adults wanted to buy a bike within the next six months¹¹.

The number of miles cycled on the road rose to 5 billion¹², overall a 45.7 per cent increase on 2019. Cycling was the only form of transport to grow during the pandemic, with cycling levels at times 100 or even 200 per cent greater¹³ than before.

Most of the new schemes have seen large and sustained rises in cycling. Among the biggest were a new lane on London Road, Leicester, where cycling levels rose by 180 per cent¹⁴, and a new track on Chiswick High Road, west London, where the number of people cycling increased by 72 per cent, up to 2700 per day¹⁵. Cycling and walking in several of the low traffic neighbourhoods has more than doubled.

Growth in the UK cycling market



The total value of the UK cycling market in 2020 was estimated as £2.31 billion, a 45% increase over 2019 as Covid-19 triggered a sharp rise in sales of bikes and other products.



An estimated £1.03 billion was spent on pedal cycles, the first time in history that expenditure on cycles in the UK has surpassed one billion pounds.



E-cycles accounted for 12% of the market by value, reaching £280 million. Expenditure on parts and accessories increased to £880 million with £40 million spent on services such as cycle repair and maintenance, boosted by the Government's Fix Your Bike Voucher Scheme.



The volume of pedal cycle sales increased by 18%, reaching an estimated 3.1 million units.



The number of e-cycles sold rose by 67% to an estimated 160,000 units.

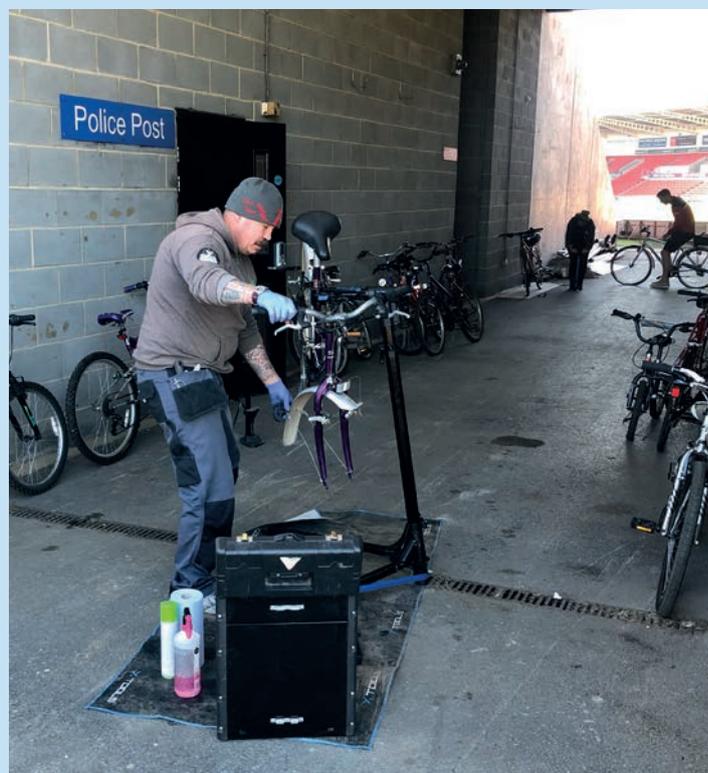


Fix Your Bike vouchers



The Government released over 400,000 vouchers to people in four tranches to help them get their cycles serviced or repaired. Provisional data suggests that around 40% of voucher users had cycled less than once a week or not at all before using the voucher; around 40% intended to use their cycle to replace car journeys; and around 60% of vouchers were redeemed in small businesses, bringing them a welcome boost.

Further funding was provided to Cycling UK to deliver Dr Bike events in workplaces and communities to act as a 'triage' service for cycle repairs.



Access Fund

We provided £20 million of funding to local authorities in 2020/21 under the Access Fund, to help people access work and education on foot and by cycle. The fund supported a wide range of measures including adult cycle training, grants for businesses, workplace and school travel planning, cycling and walking festivals and community events, cycle and walk to school initiatives, and loans of e-cycles. A further £2 million will be provided to support the Commonwealth

Courtesy of: Cycling UK

Games Cycling for Everyone programme in the West Midlands¹⁶. Additionally, £90,000 has been made available to enable car park operators to introduce more Park Active schemes¹⁷.



Courtesy of: Wheels for Wellbeing

Capability Fund

The new Local Authority Capability Fund will enable local authorities to develop infrastructure plans and deliver behaviour change activities to promote cycling and walking in their areas. It supports the commitment, made in the Prime Minister's Cycling and Walking Plan, to increase the capabilities of local authorities to plan good active travel infrastructure, including building more expertise and undertaking more evidence-based planning.

E-cargo bikes



Courtesy of: Sies Petcare

access e-cargo bikes at a discount, in an extension of the current support programme.

The Government continued to support e-cargo bikes during the pandemic through its £2 million funding programme. Over 600 e-cargo bikes have now been funded and are in use on roads across England. The Government will now provide a further £1.5 million to allow more businesses to

Walk to School Outreach

The Department gave a total of £2m to the charity Living Streets to deliver more Walk to School initiatives in 2020/21, with a focus on getting more children walking to school as schools returned from lockdown in September. The programme helps children arrive at school happier, reduces peak time congestion and improves air quality. This has enabled the Walk to School Outreach programme to help 735 schools to get more pupils walking to school. Research by Living Streets has found that on average the programme sees walking rates jump by around 23% and reduces congestion outside schools by 30%¹⁸. The Department is now providing a further £2.1 million in 2021/22, which should allow Living Streets to support more than 1,000 schools.



Courtesy of: Living Streets

Big Bike Revival



Courtesy of: Cycling UK

The Department is providing a further £2 million in 2021/22.

Cycle Rail

The most recent round of cycle rail funding in 2020 provided a further £2.5 million to Train Operating Companies to deliver 1,180 new cycle parking spaces at 30 stations. Accelerated delivery took place at many rail stations which were quieter during the lockdown periods. This funding plays a key role in encouraging more people to cycle to stations. A further £2 million will be invested in 2021/22 to create better access routes to stations, as well as high quality, accessible, safe and secure cycle parking improvements.

The Cycle Rail Working Group (CRWG) is working with British Transport Police (BTP) to cross reference existing ownership registers, allowing police to trace the owners of stolen cycles. This will help tackle cycle theft which can be a barrier to people cycling.

The Big Bike Revival programme is delivered by the charity Cycling UK¹⁹, and aims to enable people to start or return to cycling via free events held in their local community. Events focus on teaching skills, fixing cycles and increasing cycle confidence through local, short led rides. The Department provided £2 million of funding for the programme in 2020/21, which has enabled over 2,500 Dr Bike events to be delivered, with 13,000 cycles fixed. Due to the coronavirus restrictions, the majority of community events could not take place. Early delivery in 2020 shifted focus to support key workers to cycle for essential journeys, later moving to supporting widespread delivery of Dr Bike events nationwide. Research by Cycling UK shows on average, 47% of attendees were female, 45% were non-regular cyclists and 25% identify as being from an ethnic minority²⁰.



Courtesy of: Chiltern Railways



Our new and continuing commitments



We will increase funding by 30% from the amount announced at the Spending Review

We announced at the Spending Review in November 2020 that we would spend £257 million on cycling and walking in the financial year 2021/2. The total spend this year will now be £438 million, comprising a further £81 million above the £257m for cycling and walking in England outside London and a further £100m for active travel in London in the latest TfL settlement deal to December 2021.

We will use this to deliver more cycle lanes, low-traffic neighbourhoods, and school streets

There is now clear evidence that these schemes work and are popular. Hundreds of schemes have already been delivered, with many more proposed and under construction and we have encouraged local authorities to be ambitious with their proposals this year.



We will discourage the weakening or removal of schemes without proper evidence, and require full consultation that fairly reflects local views

We are revising our additional Network Management Duty guidance to make clear our expectation that schemes will remain in place and that schemes need to be given the time to bed in. The guidance also reminds authorities that gathering and publishing proper evidence about the effects of schemes is essential; and that any proposal to remove a contested scheme should involve a process that genuinely reflects local opinion – typically professional, representative polling. We are writing to all local authorities to underline this position.

We will reduce funding to councils which do not take active travel seriously, particularly in urban areas

This includes councils which remove schemes prematurely or without proper evidence, and councils which never installed them in the first place. As *Gear Change* said, an authority's performance on active travel will help determine the wider funding allocations it receives, not just on active travel. We will require more from all local authorities, urban or rural, but we will not take a one-size-fits-all approach.

We have invited bids for Mini Hollands outside London

In London, three outer boroughs with low levels of cycling were chosen through competition as “Mini-Hollands,” with intensive, transformational spending on their roads and streetscapes to make them, over time, as cycle and pedestrian-friendly as their Dutch equivalents. Segregated lanes were installed on main roads, low-traffic neighbourhoods were put in, and pedestrians were given plenty of extra space. We have now invited bids from non-London local authority areas, to benefit from intensive investment in mini-Holland schemes on the same model, and will award funding to up to 12 authorities.

We have invited bids for Active Travel social prescribing pilots

In *Gear Change*, we committed to developing a “cycling and walking on prescription” programme to overcome health inequalities and increase levels of physical activity. GPs and other referral routes would prescribe cycling and walking, and councils would install infrastructure to give people the confidence to cycle safely. We have invited local authorities to bid for feasibility study funding to develop social prescribing projects.

We are consulting on giving metro mayors new powers over the major roads in their areas

Like the Mayor of London, mayors in the eight English city regions have strategic responsibility for transport in their areas, but unlike him they have few powers over their main strategic roads. This has held back the

development of holistic transport approaches, including for buses and active travel. We are launching a consultation on giving the metro mayors powers over their key route networks similar to those exercised by Transport for London in the capital. As in London, control of most roads would remain with the constituent authorities. Subject to the results of the consultation, we intend to legislate next year.

We will allow councils to enforce against traffic offences from this year

In December we will commence the remaining elements of Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004, allowing local authorities outside London to apply for an order designating powers to civilly enforce moving traffic contraventions; examples include disregarding one-way systems or entering mandatory cycle lanes. The police will retain powers to enforce such restrictions, should they need them. The change has already largely taken effect in London, where it has significantly reduced police workload on traffic offences, allowing officers to prioritise other matters, while also improving enforcement.

We will work across government to allow some local authorities to pilot delivery of waste collection management schemes

Parts of some cities are served by as many as 50 delivery and waste management companies, with multiple pickups from businesses on the same street and large numbers of vehicles carrying out duplicating trips. Voluntary projects in areas such as the City of Westminster, which aim to reduce the number of suppliers, have brought about significant reductions in commercial vehicle traffic. Following a commitment in Gear Change, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has just consulted on franchising waste management operations. Subject to the response to the consultation, the next stage will be pilots allowing local authorities such as Westminster to better co-ordinate the number of waste collections, enabling competition and choice while reducing the number of operators and vehicle movements.



Courtesy of: Energy Saving Trust

We will improve the National Cycle Network

The National Cycle Network (NCN) is a well used and important resource, for both walkers and cyclists. It stretches over 12,000 miles (UK wide) and more than half the population lives within one mile of the Network. In 2019, over 4 million people used the Network to make nearly 650 million journeys. Given its sheer size, it is understandable that some sections (around a third) are in a poor state, with low quality surfacing on many off road stretches, making it difficult for all but the most experienced to use. £30m of the new money will be used to deliver improved surfacing, widened paths and greater accessibility (through the removal of barriers).

Active Travel England, our new body for cycling and walking, will begin work in the autumn

Active Travel England (ATE) will be a new commissioning body and inspectorate which will hold the cycling and walking budget. It will examine all applications for funding and refuse any that are not compliant with the new national LTN 1/20 standards. It will inspect finished schemes and ensure that local authorities have funding allocations reduced where schemes have not been completed as promised, or have not started or finished by the stipulated times. It will act as a statutory consultee on larger planning applications to ensure that they provide properly for walking and



Courtesy of: Julie Howden/Sustrans

cycling. The job advertisements for the Commissioner (equivalent to a chair role), Chief Executive and Head of Inspections will be launched shortly. Appointments will be made in the autumn and work will begin shortly afterwards.

The Department has also appointed Dame Sarah Storey, the Active Travel Commissioner for the Sheffield City Region and the most successful female British Paralympian of all time, as a Non-Executive Director, which will help ensure that walking and cycling considerations are integral to the Department's wider policies.

We will publish a new version of The Highway Code



We consulted on changes to The Highway Code to improve safety for cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders last year, receiving nearly 21,000 responses. Feedback was sought on three key areas:

- A hierarchy of road users which ensures that those road users who can do the greatest harm have the greatest responsibility to reduce the danger or threat they may pose to others;
- Strengthening pedestrian priority on pavements and that drivers and riders should give way to pedestrians crossing or waiting to cross the road;
- Establishing guidance on safe passing distances and speeds and ensuring that cyclists have priority at junctions when travelling straight ahead.

Respondents demonstrated a high level of agreement for the proposed changes, welcoming the timing as more people choose to cycle and walk. The Department will therefore seek to introduce all the changes and will lay the finalised alterations before Parliament in winter 2021 with the changes coming into force early in 2022.

We will help train a further 1,000 Bikeability instructors to offer training to every child and adult that wants it

The Government has a manifesto commitment to offer Bikeability training to every school child. The Prime Minister announced in his cycling and walking plan that this commitment would extend to any adult that wanted cycle training. Despite challenges with delivery due to Covid-19 restrictions, over 140,000 children received Bikeability training in 2020. The Department has continued to support the cycle training industry, ensuring that cycle instructors were able to benefit either from existing Coronavirus Job

Retention Support measures or from other forms of support. We have launched a bursary scheme to help recruit up to a thousand more instructors in 2021–22 as part of the Department’s £18 million of support for cycle training in 2021/22.



We will consider whether more of our historic railway structures could be used for walking or cycle routes or other transport purposes.

There has been concern about the fate of a small proportion of the 3,250 railway structures managed by Highways England. By the autumn, we will establish a formalised framework and engagement process for these structures to understand, in each case, whether there is a realistic prospect of it being used for active travel or other transport purposes in future; and to ensure that the views of local stakeholders, including active travel groups and the local authority, are fully taken into account. Until then, any infilling or demolition on these structures will be paused, unless there is an immediate need to act on grounds of public safety.



We will launch a national e-cycle pilot programme enabling more people across the country to access e-cycles

Electrically assisted cycles can make cycling accessible to even more people, enabling those with more challenging journeys or longer commutes to take up cycling. The Government has supported nine local authorities with £1.48 million to deliver a range of schemes which will allow different approaches to be piloted, ahead of the roll-out of a new national e-cycle support programme later in 2021. A further pilot was announced in Cornwall as part of the G7 event in June 2021.

A national e-cycle support programme will be launched in the autumn of this year.

We will publish a new road safety strategic framework

Improving road safety will not only help reduce human suffering – over the last decade around 1,800 people have died every year when using our roads, and over 25,000 a year have experienced serious, and often life changing, injuries²¹ – it can also help us achieve a range of wider benefits, including helping increase the uptake of active travel.

We know from the National Travel Attitudes Study that safety concerns are a key barrier to engaging in cycling – over 60% of respondents to recent waves



Courtesy of: Living Streets

of the National Travel Attitudes Study think it is too dangerous to cycle on the roads²². These safety concerns are not without foundation: cyclists and pedestrians face a greater risk of injury on our roads than vehicle occupants²³ and between 2006 and 2020, there have been greater reductions in fatalities for car occupants and motorcyclists than for pedestrians and pedal cyclists²⁴.

The Government is therefore starting work on a new integrated road safety strategic framework. It will draw on the Safe Systems approach²⁵, and will consider how to improve road safety, and the perception of road safety, for vulnerable road users.

We will act on pavement parking

The Government recognises that vehicles parked on the pavement can cause serious problems for pedestrians, particularly people with mobility or sight impairments, as well as those with prams or pushchairs. It also acknowledges that in some areas, for example in narrow streets with no off-street parking, pavement parking can be necessary to maintain the free passage of traffic, and access for emergency services.

In response to the Transport Select Committee's 2019 report on pavement parking, the Department undertook a public consultation in 2020 on possible solutions to this complex problem. The proposed solutions included giving councils the power to enforce against obstruction of the pavement; and introducing a London-style prohibition across the rest of England. The Department received over 15,000 responses to the consultation and is now analysing these carefully. The Government's response to the consultation will be published later in the year.



Courtesy of: Leicester City Council

Low traffic neighbourhoods: the evidence so far

Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) are where residential side streets are closed to through motor traffic to prevent rat-running with a physical barrier or increasingly an ANPR camera. No street is closed entirely: you can still drive to or from any point in an LTN, but you might have to take a longer way round.

LTNs have been perhaps the most contested element of our recent cycling and walking programme – though the concept, under various names, has been widespread for decades. Many of the LTNs in England existed before 2020, in some cases since the 1970s. It is estimated that more than 25,000 road closures of the type used in LTNs existed before the pandemic.

There is now traffic data, collected by the councils concerned, from several of the early post-pandemic LTN schemes installed last summer, typically covering their first few months. Changes in and around the LTN area can also be compared with changes in wider traffic volumes well away from it, allowing us to separate as far as possible “LTN-specific” effects from the wider effects of the pandemic. This data is preliminary, and only gives an indication at this stage.

There is also data from longer-established schemes installed before the pandemic. In these, traffic from before the installation of the scheme is compared with traffic in the latest available year before the pandemic, usually 2019 or the financial year 2019/20.

In both kinds of scheme, longer-established and recent, the data shows significant reductions in traffic, and significant increases in cycling and walking, *within* the LTNs, as you would expect.

But it also shows that a common claim about the LTNs – that they simply displace traffic to other roads – is in most cases not happening. Sometimes it did happen at the beginning, as travel patterns adjusted. But now the schemes have been in place for longer, councils are also reporting reductions in traffic on most (though not yet all) of the roads *around* the LTNs.



Traffic on the boundary main roads surrounding 12 new LTNs was surveyed by the councils concerned before and after each scheme. This shows, of the 50 boundary roads surveyed, traffic had risen on 15 of them, and fallen on 35.

LTNs work because the people living in them, several thousand in each area, change their travel behaviour – taking fewer short local journeys by car and walking or cycling more. This takes local traffic away from the surrounding roads too. On those roads, the reduction in these local car journeys appears, in most though not in all cases, to outweigh any increase caused by the diversion of longer-distance car journeys by people passing through.

But changes in travel behaviour don't happen overnight. We are noticing that the longer a scheme is in place, the greater its effect, on both the LTN and the surrounding roads. This is why we are clear that schemes must be given enough time to prove – or disprove – themselves.

Other claims sometimes made about LTNs are not true. Using years of data and more than 100,000 emergency callouts, academic research found that they do not increase emergency service response times – echoing statements made by the emergency services themselves about the post-pandemic LTN schemes²⁶. Indeed, they benefit public safety. New research shows that the pandemic LTN schemes have halved road injuries in their areas, compared with no reductions over the same period in non-LTN areas²⁷.

Other research has shown that LTNs reduce street crime, increasing safety by putting more pedestrians and cyclists on the streets²⁸. And they are socially inclusive: in London, people in areas of higher deprivation were 2.7 times more likely to live in a 2020 LTN compared to those in the least deprived quarter of the population²⁹.



Public opinion and consultation on schemes

Cycling and walking schemes can create passionate opposition, but there is now clear evidence that neither the opposition – nor the passion – reflects public views.

Multiple independent professional polls over the last year, and the government's own polling and surveys, show consistent public support for the measures on cycling and walking we and councils have taken: more than two to one on average among those who express a preference. Support for individual schemes, such as low-traffic neighbourhoods, by people living in the areas concerned is at similar levels, whenever polled or surveyed professionally.

Contrary to claims of a 'culture war,' most people do not feel strongly about these schemes. The majority of both support and opposition is "tend to support" or "tend to oppose." There are often significant numbers of people who, when asked, neither support nor oppose schemes. Only a very small minority express strong opposition, typically between 7 and 15 per cent of overall respondents.

What opposition there is to cycling and walking schemes also appears to diminish in time. In Walthamstow Village, east London, a 2015 LTN scheme caused significant opposition, including demonstrations attended by hundreds of people. The original consultation revealed roughly 50-50 support and opposition. A year after the scheme went in, only 17.6 per cent wanted to adjust the road closures.

There appears, however, to be a gap between real and perceived public opinion on this subject. One poll showed people believe that there is more opposition to these schemes than there actually is: that even though respondents themselves supported them, they believed that the public as a whole did not.

It is therefore important that consultation captures a genuinely representative picture of local views. That means listening to all, including the quieter and less vocal, not simply the most passionate; it is intended to inform decisions that members and officers make on these schemes, not to substitute for that decision making; and the consultation materials must include proper evidence and information about the effects of the proposals.

While schemes will usually have majority support, no scheme (or indeed almost any meaningful policy of any kind) will ever have unanimous support. Some councils appear to be searching for a formula which can make meaningful cycling and walking schemes acceptable to everyone, but this does not exist. We are clear that councils must not expect or require universal support and must avoid allowing any group to exercise a veto.

We revised our Network Management Duty (NMD) guidance³⁰ to state that measures should be “taken as swiftly as possible, but not at the expense of consulting local communities” and that “local residents and businesses should... be given an opportunity to comment on proposed changes” to schemes. These requirements apply as much to the removal or modification of existing schemes as to the installation of new ones. Our updated NMD guidance includes more about how to ensure that public views on contested schemes are captured accurately, through professional polling.



Public attitudes towards Low Traffic Neighbourhoods

There is growing evidence that people do support changes to their streets to enable walking and cycling. A recent Government-commissioned survey highlighted the following results from those living in, or near, a new Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN):

Supporting the reduction of traffic:



79% of respondents supported a reduction of traffic in their local area, including:

71% of respondents with mobility issues

69% of local business owners



Supporting the reallocation of road space for walking and cycling:



69% of respondents supported reallocation of local road space for walking and cycling, including:

58% of respondents with mobility issues

61% of local business owners



Supporting the local LTN:



61% of respondents supported their local LTN and **29%** were opposed, including:

49% of respondents with mobility issues supported, **36%** opposed

58% of local business owners supported, **42%** opposed



Local cycling and walking schemes

Across England, local authorities have been able to deliver high-quality cycling and walking schemes which have enabled many more people to make local journeys on foot or by cycle. The following case studies provide a snapshot of the benefits that have been unlocked:



Birmingham

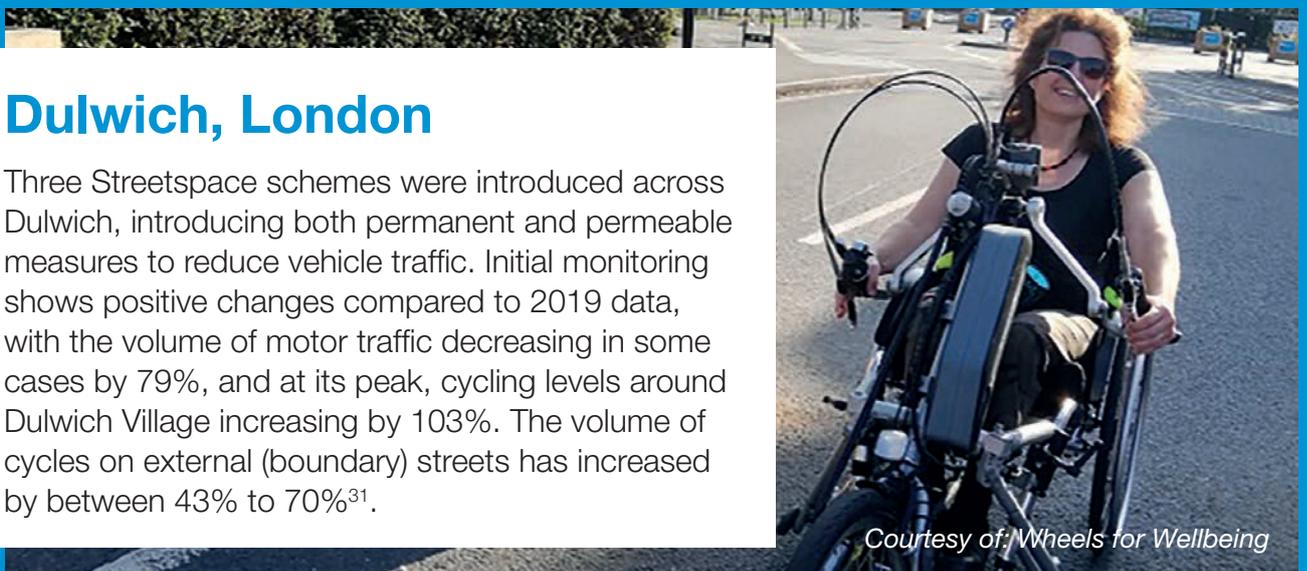
In October 2020, eight modal filters were installed in Kings Heath, Birmingham across the area to the west of the High Street. This included the pedestrianisation of a section of York Road. This 'Places for People' scheme aims to reduce the amount of traffic on residential streets and encourage more walking and cycling. 63% of residents supported or strongly supported the LTN.



Courtesy of: Peter Kindersley

Dulwich, London

Three Streetspace schemes were introduced across Dulwich, introducing both permanent and permeable measures to reduce vehicle traffic. Initial monitoring shows positive changes compared to 2019 data, with the volume of motor traffic decreasing in some cases by 79%, and at its peak, cycling levels around Dulwich Village increasing by 103%. The volume of cycles on external (boundary) streets has increased by between 43% to 70%³¹.



Courtesy of: Wheels for Wellbeing

Leicester

In Leicester, £7.8 million of Transforming Cities Fund investment has enabled nine major infrastructure projects to be undertaken. These include segregated cycle paths, purpose-built junctions and improved pedestrian footways and bus stops. Early monitoring shows a 17% rise in cycling in the last year.

City Mayor Peter Soulsby said of the Belgrave Gate scheme: “The removal of the Belgrave Flyover has had a dramatic effect on the look and feel of this area, and has hugely improved the wider public realm, as well as creating a far more pleasant route into the city.

There were some concerns locally about the impact on traffic of removing the flyover, but the major congestion feared has not happened, and it's very encouraging to see so many pedestrians and cyclists are now using this safer, more open route.”



Courtesy of: Leicester City Council



Courtesy of: Living Streets



Courtesy of: Doncaster City Council

Doncaster and Barnsley

Projects in Barnsley and Doncaster, delivered by Sustrans, have improved 2.5 miles of poor-quality sections on the Trans Pennine Trail, removing restrictive barriers to help make the route accessible to everyone. The total value of improvements in South Yorkshire is £1.7m, with an additional project in Sheffield due to be completed by September 2022.

The projects in Barnsley and Doncaster have improved accessibility, surface and drainage on the Trans Pennine Trail while also improving the habitats and biodiversity along the path. The improvements have made the path more accessible for all, whether walking, on a cycle, riding a horse, using a wheelchair or pushing a pram.

Gillian Ivey, Chair of the Trans Pennine Trail Partnership, said: "This latest phase of works in Barnsley has really shown what can be achieved through partnership working. It's wonderful to see Sustrans as a national organisation supporting the Trans Pennine Trail's partnership's initiative to improve accessibility in terms of surfacing and access controls."



Courtesy of: Newcastle City Council

Newcastle

Plans are underway to make the temporary changes on Queen Victoria Road in Newcastle permanent, following positive public feedback. The changes will make it easier and safer to travel on foot and by cycle, particularly for key workers at the Royal Victoria Infirmary. The scheme will include a protected two-way cycle lane, safer crossing facilities and a new bus stop outside the hospital.

The city council has secured £2.3 million to carry out the work; this includes £1.3m funding through the Active Travel Fund.

Cllr Arlene Ainsley, cabinet member for transport and air quality at Newcastle City Council, said: “The changes we have made on Queen Victoria Road to make it safer and easier to walk and cycle have resulted in very positive feedback, particularly from hospital staff who travel to work this way.”

Essex

Delivered as part of the £15m Chelmsford City Growth Package, a long stretch of Broomfield Road has been transformed into a sustainable transport corridor providing a safe, attractive and sustainable option for active travel. This scheme has been based on two previously installed schemes which reported a 38% and 100% increase in cycling. A full impact study is planned for later in 2021.

Before this transformation, Broomfield Road suffered from congestion and the existing cycle route desperately required an upgrade to reflect its status as a Sustainable Travel Corridor. Buses no longer have to wait for a break in traffic to pull out into the main carriageway, reducing travel times. By encouraging increased use of sustainable transport modes, especially for shorter journeys, economic growth can be supported.



Courtesy of: Wheels for Wellbeing

Waltham Forest

An early example of a Low Traffic Neighbourhood is the Waltham Forest “Mini-Holland”. With significant investment (£27m) from Transport for London in 2015, Waltham Forest was transformed with over 16 miles of segregated cycle tracks, 62 new and improved crossings, and more than 700 new trees. The scheme has led to significant changes in behaviour, with an increase of up to 45% in the average daily number of cyclists and a significant increase in the amount of walking³². The Mini-Holland scheme is also having a positive impact on air quality (a reduction of 95% in the number of households exposed to more than the EU recommended amount of Nitrogen Dioxide) and increased life expectancy, thanks to increased physical activity levels³³.

Courtesy of: Jon Bewley/photob/Sustrans



Endnotes

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- 8 [Cycle infrastructure design \(LTN 1/20\), DfT, 2020](#)
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- 10 [COVID Cycling Boom will Triple E-bike Sales by 2023, Bicycle Association, 2021](#)
- 11 [Halfords Group Financial Year 21 Results, 2021](#)
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- 15 [New Data Highlights Success of Trial Cycleway in Chiswick Including Improved Road Safety and Air Quality, TfL, 2021](#)
- 16 [Legacy Plan, Birmingham 2022, 2021](#)
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- 18 [Government Announces New Funding for the Walk to School, Living Streets](#)
- 19 [About the Big Bike Revival, Cycling UK](#)
- 20 [About the Big Bike Revival, Cycling UK](#)
- 21 [See chart 6 in Reported Road Casualties in Great Britain 2019, DfT, 2020](#)
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- 28** [The Impact of Introducing a Low Traffic Neighbourhood on Street Crime in Waltham Forest'](#), Goodman and Aldred, 2021
- 29** [Equity in New Active Travel Infrastructure: a spatial analysis of London's new Low Traffic Neighbourhoods'](#), Aldred, Verlinghieri, Itova, Goodman, 2021
- 30** [Traffic Management Act 2004: network management in response to COVID-19](#), DfT, 2021
- 31** [Dulwich LTN Monitoring Report](#), Southwark Council, 2021
- 32** [Enjoy Waltham Forest Walking and Cycling Account](#), Waltham Forest Council and TfL, 2019
- 33** [Celebrating Five Years of Mini-Holland in Waltham Forest](#), Waltham Forest Council, 2019