



Active
Travel
England

Summary guidance on local authority active travel capability ratings

Published March 2023

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// Working with ambitious local authorities will be at the heart of everything we do”



Active Travel England has been tasked with delivering the Government’s objective of ensuring 50% of trips in England’s towns and cities are walked, wheeled or cycled by 2030. To meet this target, we will work alongside local authorities to ensure people have the

high-quality infrastructure needed to make active travel part of their everyday lives.

Achieving this objective in just a few years will be challenging, so we will focus our resources on councils that have the three core ingredients to succeed: strong leadership, ambition and a track record of delivery.

Last summer, we laid the foundations for this new approach, by requiring local authorities to assess their own active travel capabilities - it was a process that involved every council outside London.

Local authorities first completed their own assessments, before working closely with Active Travel England to review plans and consider past performance data held by the Department for Transport. This two-step process ensured outcomes were robust.

This highly collaborative exercise was conducted to ensure every local authority had clarity on what was needed to secure funding and Active Travel England understood which type of support was required to ensure success.

Linking capability to funding is not new in local transport and is already used to direct some local councils’ roads maintenance funding to ensure it is spent effectively.

The highest rating is rating four, which denotes a council with significant local leadership, ambition and capability to deliver – a council without these things would be awarded a zero.

A zero rating is something no one wants, least of all Active Travel England, but to be effective, we must all work from an accurate starting point. We want every authority to succeed and be able to access

funding, so we will provide a support package that includes dedicated training, guidance and access to design support. The ratings will be reviewed annually. If in the interim a local authority demonstrates its capability has improved significantly, there will be scope to change ratings sooner.

We will help local authorities give people a real choice to travel actively if they wish. When it comes to cycling, although fully protected routes along arterial roads into towns and cities are often effective, they are not the only type of infrastructure that works. A network of properly connected quiet streets in local neighbourhoods, well-placed road crossings, improved junctions and traffic restrictions near schools can also be highly effective for all types of active travel. We will help local authorities to deliver the most appropriate infrastructure for their context.

Done well, active travel provision creates attractive, healthy places where people want to live and invest, benefiting local economies and returning very high value for money. However, we have seen some projects delivered without appropriate community engagement and instances in which trial measures have been abandoned too early to properly assess their effect. Poorly considered and badly delivered schemes waste taxpayers’ money and also make it harder to introduce new schemes in the future.

To improve efficiency and effectiveness, Active Travel England will identify and disseminate best practice across the country to help local authorities avoid these pitfalls. It will encourage methods that help solutions emerge locally, rather than dictating the approach. The rating process will be the foundation of this partnership, helping us to provide custom support. The process has already yielded insight to guide the use of the £32.9 million Capability Fund we announced earlier this year.

Working with ambitious local authorities will be at the heart of everything we do because we won’t achieve our targets without councils delivering consistently, high-quality infrastructure that people choose to use, so we will continue to work in partnership, to co-create and share best practice.

Danny Williams
CEO

Introduction

Active Travel England has been established to drive up standards of active travel infrastructure and support councils to deliver high-quality schemes that enable more people to walk, wheel or cycle for everyday trips. Ahead of any grant funding decisions, it is important for Active Travel England to understand local authorities’ current capabilities and how effective they are at delivery, to ensure the correct support is offered and maximum value for money is achieved.

In this first ever review of active travel capability, each local transport authority self-assessed their capabilities and assigned themselves a rating. This was then subjected to a validation process led by Active Travel England. The resulting ratings will be used to guide the allocation of funding and other resources.

All 79 local transport authorities in England outside London (combined authorities, unitary and county councils) have completed the process. This report publishes those ratings, sets out how they were developed and explains how they will be used.

What are the ratings?

Ratings are an assessment of how effective authorities are at delivering the type of schemes that will support the objectives set out in the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy. They focus primarily on three areas: local leadership, plans and delivery record. ‘Delivery record’ also considers whether authorities require developers of new housing or industrial developments to include good facilities for walking, wheeling and cycling.

Rating	Description
Rating 0	Local leadership for active travel is not obvious, no significant plans are in place, the authority has delivered only lower complexity schemes.
Rating 1	Some local leadership with basic plans and isolated interventions that do not yet obviously form a plan for a network.
Rating 2	Strong local leadership, with clear plans that form the basis of an emerging network with a few elements already in place.
Rating 3	Very strong local leadership, comprehensive plans, and a significant network in place with a growing number of people choosing to walk, wheel and cycle.
Rating 4	Established culture of active travel with successive increases in walking, wheeling and cycling, underpinned by a dense integrated network and highly supportive policies to give more people the choice to walk or cycle.

Why have they been developed?

Ratings are an objective assessment of each authority's ability to increase active travel ratings and ensure public money is targeted effectively to deliver the most benefits. The ratings also introduce healthy competition, allow performance to be tracked over time and enable the right type of resources to be offered to increase effectiveness so that maximum value for money is achieved.

How were they calculated?

Local authorities completed a self-assessment and assigned themselves a rating which was then validated against internal evidence held by the Department for Transport (13 metrics, performance history and other proxy data). The self-assessment asked local transport authorities to assign themselves a rating, with supporting evidence, in three areas: local leadership, plans and delivery record. Where the internal evidence did not match self-assessed ratings, local authority ratings were determined by Active Travel England. The assessment panel was comprised of experts, highly experienced in local authority delivery of active travel interventions. Their appraisal was based on the evidence submitted by local authorities.

Do they affect funding?

Ratings are used to guide the initial allocation of Active Travel and Capability Funding. Higher rated authorities are eligible to access more funding, however effectiveness, quality and deliverability will be the primary factors in deciding final allocations. Local authorities rated zero will not be invited to apply for the Active Travel Fund but may be eligible for capability funding if they wish to improve. It is important to note that active travel benefits can be delivered using a range of different funds. Active Travel England is working with funding sponsors to incorporate the ratings within the criteria for all funding where active travel provision is being provided. Inspections will take place to assess the quality of provision on the ground. As well as quality assurance of schemes themselves, the inspections will be used to inform future ratings.

What support is available to improve?

Active Travel England exists to ensure standards are high and to assist local authorities in meeting those standards. Active Travel England will support local authorities to maintain or improve ratings, so eventually, there will be no rating zero authorities.

Support Scope

Funding Funding for capability building initiatives, including planning, evidence collection, engagement, pipeline development, technical training. Funding scaled to authority population.

Training Training as a core offer covering all areas of programme delivery, including Specialist Manual for Streets, community engagement, design tool training also available.

Design reviews Review of network plans and pipeline schemes up to feasibility stage. Ad-hoc reviews of existing schemes in development, to address particular problem areas, e.g. pinch points and complex junctions.

Action plan support Review of actions proposed to improve rating, attend meetings and site visits to review scheme implementation and discuss how local challenges can be addressed, including engagement with senior officers and Councillors.

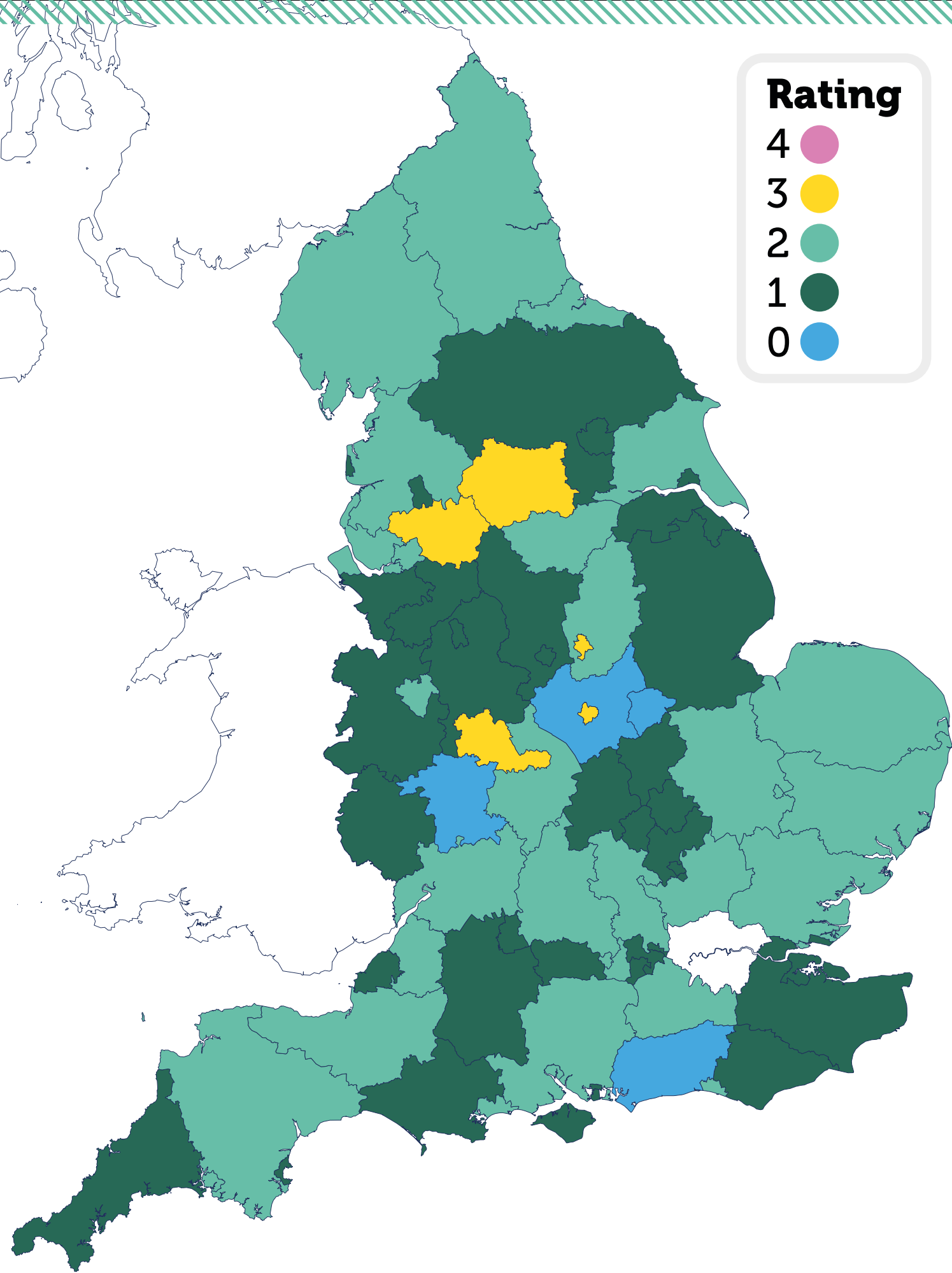
Peer-to-peer support Facilitate the sharing of best practice by pairing more experienced authorities with those facing similar challenges and facilitating working groups.

When are they updated?

The next assessment will take place in summer 2023.

Local authority ratings

LA name	Rating	LA name	Rating
Bedford	1	North East Lincolnshire	1
Blackburn with Darwen	1	North Lincolnshire	1
Blackpool	1	North Northamptonshire	1
Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole	2	North Somerset	1
Bracknell Forest	1	North Yorkshire	1
Brighton and Hove	2	Nottingham	3
Buckinghamshire	2	Nottinghamshire	2
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CA	2	Oxfordshire	2
Central Bedfordshire	1	Plymouth	2
Cheshire East	1	Portsmouth	1
Cheshire West and Chester	1	Reading	2
Cornwall	1	Rutland	0
Cumbria	2	South Yorkshire CA	2
Derby	1	Shropshire	1
Derbyshire	1	Slough	1
Devon	2	Somerset	2
Dorset	1	Southampton	2
East Riding of Yorkshire	2	Southend-on-Sea	1
East Sussex	1	Staffordshire	1
Essex	2	Stoke-on-Trent	1
Gloucestershire	2	Suffolk	2
Greater Manchester CA	3	Surrey	2
Hampshire	2	Swindon	1
Herefordshire	1	Tees Valley CA	2
Hertfordshire	2	Telford and Wrekin	2
Isle of Wight	1	Thurrock	1
Isles of Scilly	1	Torbay	1
Kent	1	Warrington	2
Kingston upon Hull	1	Warwickshire	2
Lancashire	2	West Berkshire	1
Leicester	3	West Midlands CA	3
Leicestershire	0	West Northamptonshire	1
Lincolnshire	1	West of England CA	2
Liverpool City Region CA	2	West Sussex	0
Luton	1	West Yorkshire CA	3
Medway	1	Wiltshire	1
Milton Keynes	1	Windsor and Maidenhead	1
Norfolk	2	Wokingham	2
North East Joint Transport Committee	2	Worcestershire	0
		York	1



Local authority capability ratings in active travel, 2022



Active Travel England