



Active
Travel
England

Business Plan 2025-26





Summary

Active Travel England is enabling people nationwide to be more active by making streets safe and accessible for walking, wheeling and cycling.

We do this by building capability across the country to deliver high-quality networks, routes and places.

We engage, we enable, we assure and we advocate to make active travel a core part of transport planning.


Our purpose

At the heart of everything we do is raising standards in street design, to ensure our country’s streets become safer and more accessible.

Our strategic priorities

- 1. Support our partners to perform = *we engage*
 - 2. Build capability = *we enable*
 - 3. Enhance safety and accessibility = *we assure*
 - 4. Invest in impactful programmes and share what works = *we advocate*
 - 5. Be an excellent agency
- Our corporate values of evolving, purposeful, inclusive and collaborative will be the foundation that embeds our ways of working into everything we do.

We can **experiment, learn,** and **adapt without fear of failure.**



Evolving

We are a **professional, data-led agency,** and we **will make a difference** through our work.



Purposeful

We will **embrace alternative perspectives** and create an environment where everyone has the opportunity to **participate and thrive.**



Inclusive

We will have a **transparent, open, and connected** working environment where people can easily identify **ways to work together.**



Collaborative

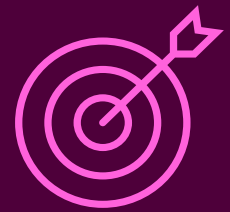
Our values

Evolving



We are a young organisation, and we will learn from our mistakes as we mature. We can experiment, learn, and adapt without fear of failure. We will adopt a no-blame culture based on trust and understanding. We will encourage openness and the ability to challenge one another. We recognise the need for continuous refinement of processes as we grow. We plan, we do, we review.

Purposeful



We are a professional, data-led agency, and we will make a difference through our work. We will be nationally strategic and locally relevant – working closely with delivery partners to encourage and support their work. We will lead with energy, vision, and creativity to inspire partners to work towards a shared purpose. We will ensure we have the right resource to service our key priorities, and we will be efficient and pragmatic in our approach.

Inclusive



Diversity brings us strength and we will embrace alternative perspectives and fresh ideas. We will encourage diversity of thought, and we will create a warm, genuine atmosphere where everyone is treated equally regardless of their grade or role. We appreciate that we have a unique, talented set of individuals and will invest time in career conversations and professional growth.

Collaborative



We will have a transparent, open, and connected working environment where people can easily identify areas of collaboration. We will work smoothly across teams and grades to a set list of defined priorities, and everyone will understand how their work contributes to the agency's role. We encourage people to show their strengths and views. We will encourage openness and the ability to challenge one another.

Introduction

This business plan is an evolution of ATE's first two years of operation.

A three-year Corporate Plan will be published on completion of the Spending Review 2025 and on publication of the third Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy.

ATE's 2023-2025 Corporate Plan focused on the establishment of the agency, including its role as a statutory consultee in the planning system, its inspectorate function, a data and analysis team charged with delivering new modelling, insight and data tools, as well as setting up an operations function.

Early successes for the agency have included:

- 99% of the 3,000 planning consultations received have been responded to on time, ensuring that 340,000 homes and 800,000 residents are provided with good walking, wheeling and cycling options from their doorsteps.
- There has been a 500% improvement in schemes meeting minimum quality standards at bid submission stage.
- With ATE expert support, authorities have delivered active travel schemes at more than twice the rate of other small transport schemes.
- More than 1,000 active travel schemes have been reviewed, assessed or inspected across 10 funding streams.
- With ATE funding, local authorities have quadrupled the number of training activities to upskill staff.
- 7,500 people in authorities have accessed training through our own webinars and roadshows, and 1,000+ local authority officers have received bespoke design and planning training.
- More than 10 new guidance notes and toolkits have been published by ATE.
- Over one million children have been taught to cycle.
- Over three million people have been engaged through behaviour change projects including social prescribing, walk to school, adult cycle training and walking pilots.

This business plan for 2025-26 builds on these early successes and learning, sharpening the agency's focus on supporting our delivery partners, building their capability and shining a spotlight on what works. This in turn will make our streets safer and more accessible and will enable more people to be more active more often.

It is vital that we **support our partners to perform**. That means working closely with local and combined authorities to develop local network plans. We will also support DfT to deliver new design guidance, namely a new Manual for Streets and associated technical annexes, plus design advice on bus stop accessibility and rural environments.

We will work with authorities and Mayors to use those local network plans to inform and publish a national active travel infrastructure plan, leading to the creation of a proposed national network. This will demonstrate how the level of local ambition to support active travel can contribute to changing travel patterns nationally, while ensuring more consistency in quality and standards.

We will also deliver a safer walking network pilot programme in five towns and cities, including starting a national conversation about the barriers that women and girls face when walking in their local area, investigating what they need to feel safer.

A key focus of ATE's work will be to **build capability in the sector**. We will do this by continuing to assess capability, developing a performance dashboard that can be modified for local needs, and streamlining processes to further reduce the burden on authorities. We will also deliver a structured training and development programme to upskill place-making professionals and elected members, including our flagship conference Active City, which will take place in York in July 2025.

We know that we will only enable people to be more active if we **enhance safety and accessibility**. In practice this means establishing a technical advisory group, further developing the pre-application advice we give in our statutory consultee role and reviewing our tools, guidance and supporting evidence. We will also continue to conduct inspections and provide design assurance.

We need to make sure funding is directed in the best way, **investing in impactful programmes and sharing what works**.

This means working with authorities to deliver schemes and embedding new performance indicators within devolved settlements. We will continue to invest in Bikeability cycle training and will work with authorities to develop a focused active travel to school programme that provides the foundations for the national network. We will publish new evidence, fact sheets and case studies, showing the link between quality and uptake.

We will also continue to strive to **be an excellent agency**, which underpins everything we do. We will deliver the commitments in our People Plan, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan, and People Survey Action Plans to improve skills and talent pipelines and create a workplace where our staff feel respected, safe and supported, and have the opportunity to thrive.

We will make sure we embed our corporate values of evolving, purposeful, inclusive and collaborative into everything we do – including in our processes and how we conduct ourselves.

The strategic case: more people, more active, more often

Enabling more people to be more active more often as part of their everyday lives is the most effective contribution that can be made to reducing levels of physical inactivity.

As the Chief Medical Officer's 2024 report made clear, "making walking and cycling more practical and safer, and access to green space easier and more equitable, would go a long way toward removing barriers to improving physical activity levels and could significantly improve the health of England's increasingly urban population".

Achieving the objectives set out in the second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy would mean getting 5.5 million more people physically active, delivering at least £100 billion in benefits through reduced mortality and increased productivity. This could reduce demand on GP appointments by up to 1.8 million a year.

Active travel consistently boosts economic growth by increasing footfall in high streets. It also enhances new housing developments with safe and attractive active travel infrastructure, while reducing highways maintenance costs.

Investment in active travel also supports increased public transport use, and vice versa. Increasing bus patronage means more people walking, which unlocks longer journeys to access jobs, training and spending opportunities across wider economic geographies. Making walking, wheeling and cycling journeys to bus stops, stations and interchanges easy and safe is a key means to enabling increased public transport patronage.

By basing new housing developments around public transport, underpinned by active travel, we can deliver a different future to the car dependency built in by the last 15 years of development. While changes to the National Planning Policy Framework open the door to this vision-led approach, we need to help local authorities and developers step through it.

Devolution is giving more power to local and combined authorities. ATE will support this by working with those authorities to build capability, working with them on joint initiatives to improve quality and safety standards while increasing the speed of scheme delivery. This is in line with the recommendations of the National Audit Office, which noted that ATE has the potential to address longstanding issues relating to the standard of infrastructure delivery.

Increasing the quality of routes will improve safety and accessibility, meaning more people with disabilities and lower levels of physical activity would be enabled to travel by walking, wheeling and cycling.



Strategic Priorities Delivery Plan

Support our partners to perform

Local and combined authorities are responsible for their transport strategies and most roads, routes and neighbourhoods in their area.

To achieve its objectives, ATE and national government need capable authorities with sufficient resources and powers to deliver. ATE will work closely and engage with local leaders, Mayors and transport professionals to offer support, to advise, and to understand what they need to deliver effective and coherent active travel networks.

We will:

1. Engage Mayors and other local leaders to inform, advise and support delivery of local network plans that build towards a coherent national network.
2. Support the DfT to develop a new Manual for Streets, deliver training and innovative solutions to maximise its use, and publish design advice or technical annexes to it including on bus stop accessibility, rural settings, street adoptions, designing active travel into schools, and cycle parking.
3. Develop a framework for data sharing and monitoring and evaluation.
4. Deliver a walking network pilot programme in five towns and cities.
5. Support the DfT and other parts of government with technical information that informs policy development, including development of the third Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy.

We will track our performance by:

- Developing a customer satisfaction/stakeholder engagement survey.
- Monitoring delivery of initiatives through milestone reviews.



Build capability in the sector

ATE has already begun to build capability by delivering training, roadshows and the Local Authority Active Travel Capability Ratings to target resources.

The aim is to increase the overall capability of the sector, leaving no one behind. We will build our successful seminar series into a holistic training and development programme, alongside bespoke capability-building support.

We will:

1. Conduct the next Local Authority Active Travel Capability Assessment and develop a performance dashboard to increase efficiency and transparency.

2. Develop a customer satisfaction survey to inform future products and services while also ensuring we adequately capture feedback from existing engagement.

3. Develop a structured training and development programme to upskill and train relevant built environment/place-making professionals and elected members, so that they have the knowledge, skills and expertise to deliver attractive and safe infrastructure and programmes.
4. Deliver learning and development events to engage our teams and key stakeholders, including Active City York in 2025.

5. Work intensively with at least 10 lower capability authorities over the next year to improve their record of delivery.

6. Commission work identified by partners that would increase the efficiency of the sector, including a strategic case for investment to assist delivery partners in local case making.

We will track our performance by:

- Improving local authority capability ratings by 5% over the 2025-26 period. This is compared to 9% for the previous 2023-25 period.
- Monitoring delivery of initiatives through milestone reviews.



Enhance safety and accessibility

Higher quality active travel infrastructure is safer and more accessible. This means more people can use it, leading to more benefits to society. Early analysis also shows higher quality design leads to a significant reduction in the risk of collisions. We will increase our resources to provide design assurance support across all transport funding and new developments.

We will:

1. Convene a technical advisory group to support the creation of new products and services. The group’s expertise in how to deliver accessible and inclusive infrastructure will ensure these products and services meet the needs of the sector.

2. Develop a pre-application service to provide advice earlier in the planning process. This will complement our existing role as a statutory consultee and promote the use of vision-led development, based on the principles within the Manual for Streets and new national planning policy.
3. Provide design assurance support to local authorities to increase the quality of scheme design and support network development. This will be done by supporting combined authorities to establish design review panels and update design standards if required as new combined authorities are set up, and assist local authorities seeking to do the same.

4. Review our suite of tools, guidance and supporting evidence for estimating active travel uplift in a way that can speed up local assurance processes.

5. Conduct inspections of completed schemes to provide confidence they were built, and provide structured feedback to guide improvements.

We will track our performance by:

- Improving the percentage of total funding in the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy that is assured for level of service from 19.1% to 20%.
- Improving the average increase in scheme quality from 21.5% to 24.0%.
- Responding to 100% of planning applications within the statutory timescale (currently 98.5%).
- Monitoring delivery of initiatives through milestone reviews.

Invest in impactful programmes and share what works

Projects in the Active Travel Fund are delivered sooner than equivalent transport projects, thanks to bespoke support and commitment to aligning projects with capability. Aligning revenue programmes with capital investment also releases higher benefits. We will continue this approach as funding is further devolved and enhance our programme to analyse the impact of investment, sharing case studies to support continual development.

We will:

1. Deliver the £168.5 million Consolidated Active Travel Fund providing resource and capital funding to local authorities.

2. Embed active travel performance indicators within new consolidated and integrated funding outcome frameworks, with a focus on tracking the quality and speed of delivery against objectives.

3. Continue investment in the Bikeability cycle training programme and review its effectiveness while also supporting authorities to develop an active travel to school programme, including expanding our offer of travel planning and engagement activity.
4. Publish evidence on the link between the quality of design and its impact on uptake and safety.

5. Publish case studies, best practice guides and evidence sheets of what works for local authority partners and raise awareness of the benefits of active travel.

6. Work with authorities to develop a strategy and practical methods to effectively measure the impact of active travel investment, with associated monitoring, evaluation and data sharing.

7. Publish research on appraisal methods to better incorporate morbidity, journey quality and economic benefits.

We will track our performance by:

- Increasing the number of ATE-funded capital projects completed on schedule from the current 58% (the current figure is based on ATF3 schemes completed within six months of the delivery period).
- Increasing the number of people engaged via activation programmes from 1.6 million to 1.7 million people.
- Monitoring delivery of initiatives through milestone reviews.

Be an excellent agency

We are committed to being an excellent agency of the Department and will continue to embed our corporate values of *evolving, purposeful, inclusive and collaborative* into everything we do. We will enable our staff and partners to succeed so they have the tools and processes they need to deliver our strategy. Through an efficient corporate centre, we will support our staff in the delivery of high-quality HR, finance, communications, project and portfolio management and commercial and business support services through our service offer.

We will:

1. Deliver commitments in our People Plan, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan, and People Survey Action Plans to improve skills and talent pipelines and create a workplace where our staff feel respected, safe and supported and have the opportunity to thrive.

2. Embed our corporate values of evolving, purposeful, inclusive and collaborative into everything we do in our processes and how we conduct ourselves.

3. Support the National Active Travel Commissioner and ensure effective collaboration with Ministers and DfTc, including responding to correspondence as standard.
4. Invest in our programme management, data governance, and appropriate digital initiatives to build services that increase efficiencies in how we run the agency and interact with our key customers.

5. Conduct a governance review to enhance decision-making across ATE and how decisions are communicated to staff.

We will track our performance by:

- Increasing our employee engagement score from 73% to 75%.
- Increasing our official correspondence responded to on time from 93% to 95%.
- Monitoring delivery of initiatives through milestone reviews.
- Delivering recommendations made in internal auditing processes.





Key Performance Indicators

The KPIs are listed under each of the five strategic priorities and related milestones. We will supplement these by undertaking a customer satisfaction review to ensure we continue to learn from what our customers need, and by ensuring that we act on recommendations from an ongoing internal audit programme. The KPIs will be reviewed annually.

Financial Plan 25-26

£000s	Resource	Capital
Pay costs	8,229	
Non-pay costs	43,726	129,520
Total	51,955	129,520
of which		
Research		750
Digital	1,479	
Staff related	338	
Other	1,680	250
Grants	40,230	128,520



