



Active  
Travel  
England

# Local Authority Active Travel Capability Ratings 2025

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# Foreword



We all want our kids to be independent and millions of parents would love to let their children travel to school under

their own steam. We all want streets where older people and those with disabilities feel comfortable enough to walk or wheel to the local shops.

For this simple vision to become a reality, people of all ages need to feel confident that our public spaces are safe and accessible. Creating that trust is our job.

Working with local authorities across the country, we have identified ‘what must be true’ to give everyone, from parents to pensioners, the confidence to add more activity into their day. At the heart of everything we do is raising standards in street design, to ensure our country’s streets become safer and more accessible.

When ATE was formed three years ago, it found wide variation in local capability to deliver safe, high-quality infrastructure. Some authorities were already advanced, while others lacked the skills or resources to design active travel networks. To address this, and building on years of experience, ATE developed a pioneering capability rating system to identify what type of support was needed for each authority.

For areas with strong local leadership already in place, dedicated teams, and well-developed plans, the priority was funding to build. For others, the first need was training and technical support to develop local expertise. The impact of this tailored approach has been remarkable and driven a rapid improvement in quality – with funding and skills properly matched – and a significant increase in the number of authorities able to deliver life-changing projects.

The results speak for themselves: millions more people are now able to consider walking, wheeling, or cycling as part of their everyday journeys.

2025 has been a landmark year for investment, with £616 million of capital funding committed in the Spending Review dedicated to active travel infrastructure through to 2030, giving local authorities the certainty to plan and invest in their long-term futures.

I’m delighted that nine more authorities have improved their capability rating this year, following eight last year. It’s particularly encouraging that 11 authorities are now rated at Level 3, reflecting their hard work and commitment to residents. And for the first time, it’s not just the large city regions leading the way – several rural county councils have joined them at the forefront of progress.



A particular highlight this year was the moment all of England's metro mayors came together to pledge their support for safe school networks. Collectively, this will deliver around 3,500 miles of safe routes serving an initial 1,000 schools, benefiting their 20 million residents. It was inspiring to see leaders unite across political divides to create the first ever 'locally designed national plan' to give families healthier, more affordable transport choices.

I learned many years ago as an athlete that measuring current capability is critical to being able to improve and ultimately, deliver results. It's exciting to see leaders across the country embrace this same approach, so together, we can create the happier, healthier and greener communities we desperately need. Places where people have the freedom to get around in the way that works for them – to genuinely build health back into our streets.

**Chris Boardman**  
**National Active Travel Commissioner**  
**Active Travel England**



# Introduction

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.

The capability of local authorities is central to this ambition. To support this, we undertake capability ratings to assess each authority's ability to plan, design and deliver active travel schemes. Ratings also allow us to track authority capability over time, so we can target support and funding to where it is needed most and to ensure for value for money. It also fosters competition and collaboration between authorities to help drive up standards.

## What are the ratings?

Ratings are an assessment of how effective authorities are at delivering the changes needed to support the objectives set out in the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy. They focus primarily on three areas:

- local leadership and organisational capability
- network planning
- delivery

All local and combined authorities in England (excluding London) were invited to self-assess their own capability [between levels 0 and 4](#), at both a section level and question level.

## How they are linked to funding

The refreshed 2025 capability ratings will be used to calculate multi-year funding allocations for local authorities within integrated and consolidated settlements. This will set local transport budgets up to 2029/30.

Funding allocations are based on population size and capability rating, with higher levels of funding allocated to higher capability authorities. This year, we have increased funding per head for more capable authorities who will not receive Transport for City Regions (TCR) funding to help accelerate their ability to deliver high-quality schemes. This is to ensure more equitable distribution of funds for capable authorities who currently do not have access to larger funding pots.



# Approach

## Changes from last year

This year we evolved the self-assessment to make it easier for authorities to complete. This included:

- reducing the number of questions and focusing them more on evidencing local capability
- providing relevant data held by ATE on delivery to support completion of the self-assessment

This year, we also asked all authorities who were seeking to increase their rating to provide designs for up to two recently completed schemes to evidence what they have delivered on the ground in their local communities. We assessed this on quality, based on our design assurance tools where applicable, and on complexity, with a weighting of low, medium or high. This allowed for a range of different interventions to be considered, from simple crossings, to whole area schemes, through to more complex corridor schemes.

These schemes were inspected by ATE in line with [How we do Inspections guidance](#), with the results provided to authorities to better inform their self-assessment and used in our moderation process.

## Structure of the self-assessment

- **Section 1 – Contextual information:** organisational information on staffing and resource levels (not rated).
  - **Section 2 – Leadership and organisational capability:** commitment of leaders to active travel, supportive policies and organisational capability to design and deliver schemes.
  - **Section 3 – Network planning:** capability in development of strategic network plans e.g. Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plan (LCWIP), or equivalent.
  - **Section 4 – Delivery:** ability to deliver capital and revenue projects on time and to budget.
  - **Section 5 – Overall capability assessment:** final assessment of capability across all key dimensions.
- In response to authority feedback, the time available for completing self-assessments was increased from eight weeks to ten weeks, running from June to September 2025. After authorities completed a self-assessment, responses were put through a moderation exercise to examine the ratings and supporting evidence supplied by authorities to ensure it was being consistently used to select appropriate ratings.
- After this, a final moderated rating was generated for all authorities.



# 2025 ratings

Self-assessment returns were received from all 80 Local Transport Authorities in England outside London.

## How they compare to last year

This year, 10 authorities have changed their overall rating, with nine increasing, and one reducing:

- Four authorities have increased from level 1 to level 2
- Five authorities have increased from level 2 to level 3
- One authority has decreased from level 2 to level 1

Table 1 – Year on year breakdown:

Year/Level	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Total
2023	4	40	30	5	0	79
2024	0	42	32	6	0	80
<b>2025</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>80</b>
Annual change	0	-3	-2	+5	0	



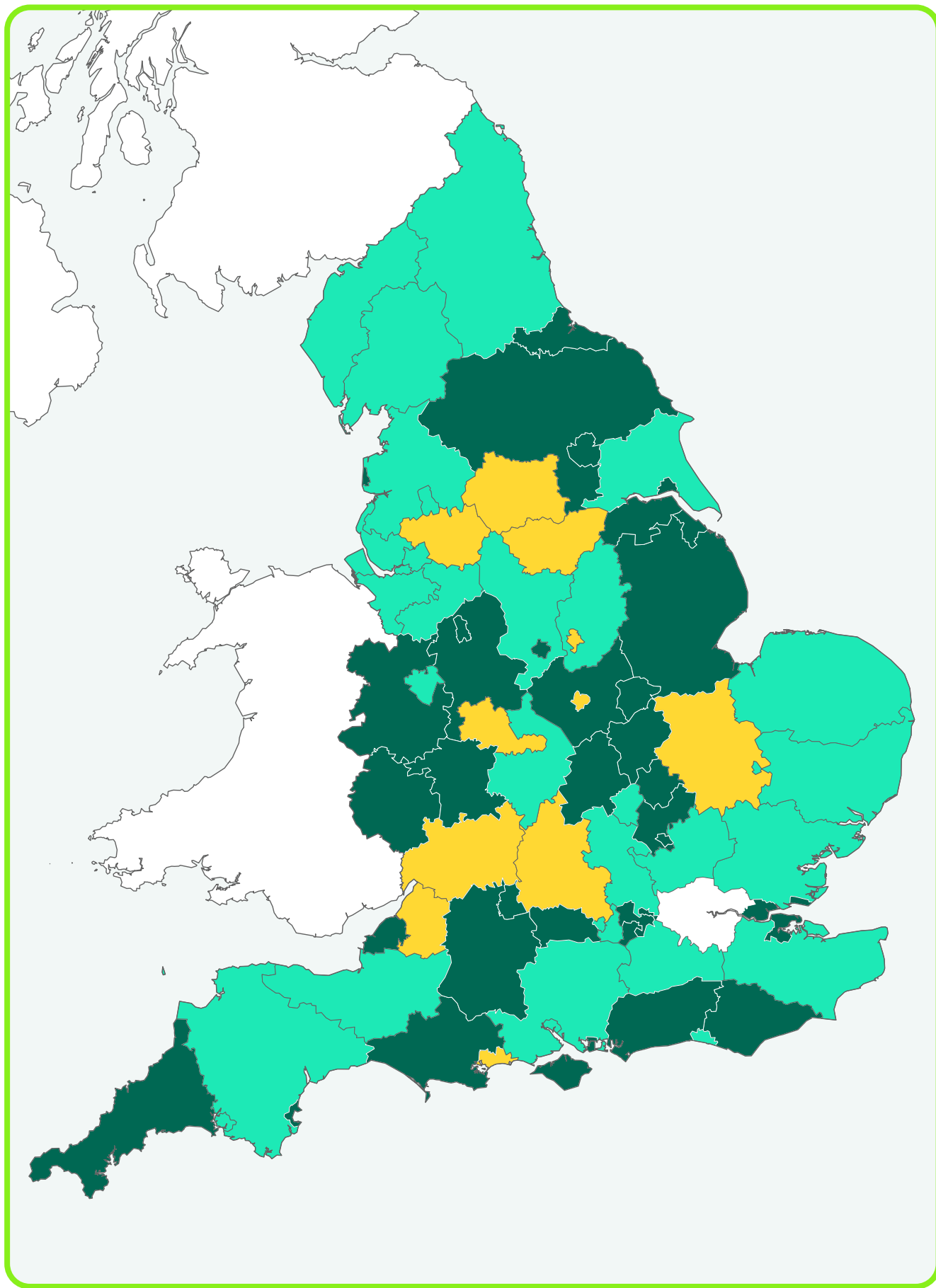
**Table 2 – Capability ratings by authority 2025 vs 2024:**

Local Transport Authority	CR rating 2024	CR rating 2025	Change
Bedford	1	1	
Blackburn with Darwen	2	2	
Blackpool	1	1	
<b>Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole</b>	2	<b>3</b>	<b>+1</b>
Bracknell Forest	1	1	
Brighton and Hove	2	2	
Buckinghamshire	2	2	
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority	3	3	
Central Bedfordshire	1	1	
<b>Cheshire East</b>	1	<b>2</b>	<b>+1</b>
Cheshire West and Chester	2	2	
Cornwall	1	1	
Cumberland	2	2	
Derby	1	1	
<b>Derbyshire</b>	1	<b>2</b>	<b>+1</b>
Devon	2	2	
Dorset	1	1	
East Riding of Yorkshire	2	2	
East Sussex	1	1	
Essex	2	2	
<b>Gloucestershire</b>	2	<b>3</b>	<b>+1</b>
Greater Manchester Combined Authority	3	3	
Hampshire	2	2	
Herefordshire	1	1	
Hertfordshire	2	2	
Isle of Wight	1	1	
Isles of Scilly	1	1	
Kent	2	2	
Kingston upon Hull	1	1	
Lancashire	2	2	
Leicester	3	3	
Leicestershire	1	1	
Lincolnshire	1	1	
Liverpool City Region Combined Authority	2	2	
Luton	1	1	
Medway	1	1	
<b>Milton Keynes</b>	1	<b>2</b>	<b>+1</b>
Norfolk	2	2	
Northeast Joint Transport Committee	2	2	
Northeast Lincolnshire	1	1	
North Lincolnshire	1	1	
North Northamptonshire	1	1	



Local Transport Authority	CR rating 2024	CR rating 2025	Change
North Somerset	1	1	
North Yorkshire	1	1	
Nottingham	3	3	
<b>Nottinghamshire</b>	1	<b>2</b>	<b>+1</b>
<b>Oxfordshire</b>	2	<b>3</b>	<b>+1</b>
Plymouth	2	2	
Portsmouth	1	1	
Reading	2	2	
Rutland	1	1	
Shropshire	1	1	
Slough	1	1	
Somerset	2	2	
<b>South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority</b>	2	<b>3</b>	<b>+1</b>
Southampton	2	2	
Southend-on-Sea	1	1	
Staffordshire	1	1	
Stoke-on-Trent	1	1	
Suffolk	2	2	
Surrey	2	2	
Swindon	1	1	
<b>Tees Valley Combined Authority</b>	2	<b>1</b>	<b>-1</b>
Telford and Wrekin	2	2	
Thurrock	1	1	
Torbay	1	1	
Warrington	2	2	
Warwickshire	2	2	
West Berkshire	1	1	
West Midlands Combined Authority	3	3	
West Northamptonshire	1	1	
<b>West of England Combined Authority</b>	2	<b>3</b>	<b>+1</b>
West Sussex	1	1	
West Yorkshire Combined Authority	3	3	
Westmorland and Furness	2	2	
Wiltshire	1	1	
Windsor and Maidenhead	1	1	
Wokingham	2	2	
Worcestershire	1	1	
York	1	1	

**Figure 1 – Map showing capability ratings 2025 across England:**



Rating:  0  1  2  3  4

# Level descriptors

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

Note the infographics overleaf illustrate typical characteristics of walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure in low and high capability areas. They are not intended to be exhaustive, noting that the capability assessment covers 16 question topics in total. The infographics should not be taken as indicative of actual design layouts, and instead show typical characteristics that are seen in built-out networks.





## Low capability authority



**No** network plan



Members who are **not supportive** of active travel policies



Only delivered **isolated schemes/routes**



**Very few policies in place** to support and deliver an increase in active travel



Has only delivered **low complexity** active travel schemes outside LTN 1/20 design guidance



Schemes are **not delivered on time**

### Key



Planned routes or upgrades



Road crossing



Cyclops junction



Active travel routes



Cycle parking



Placemaking

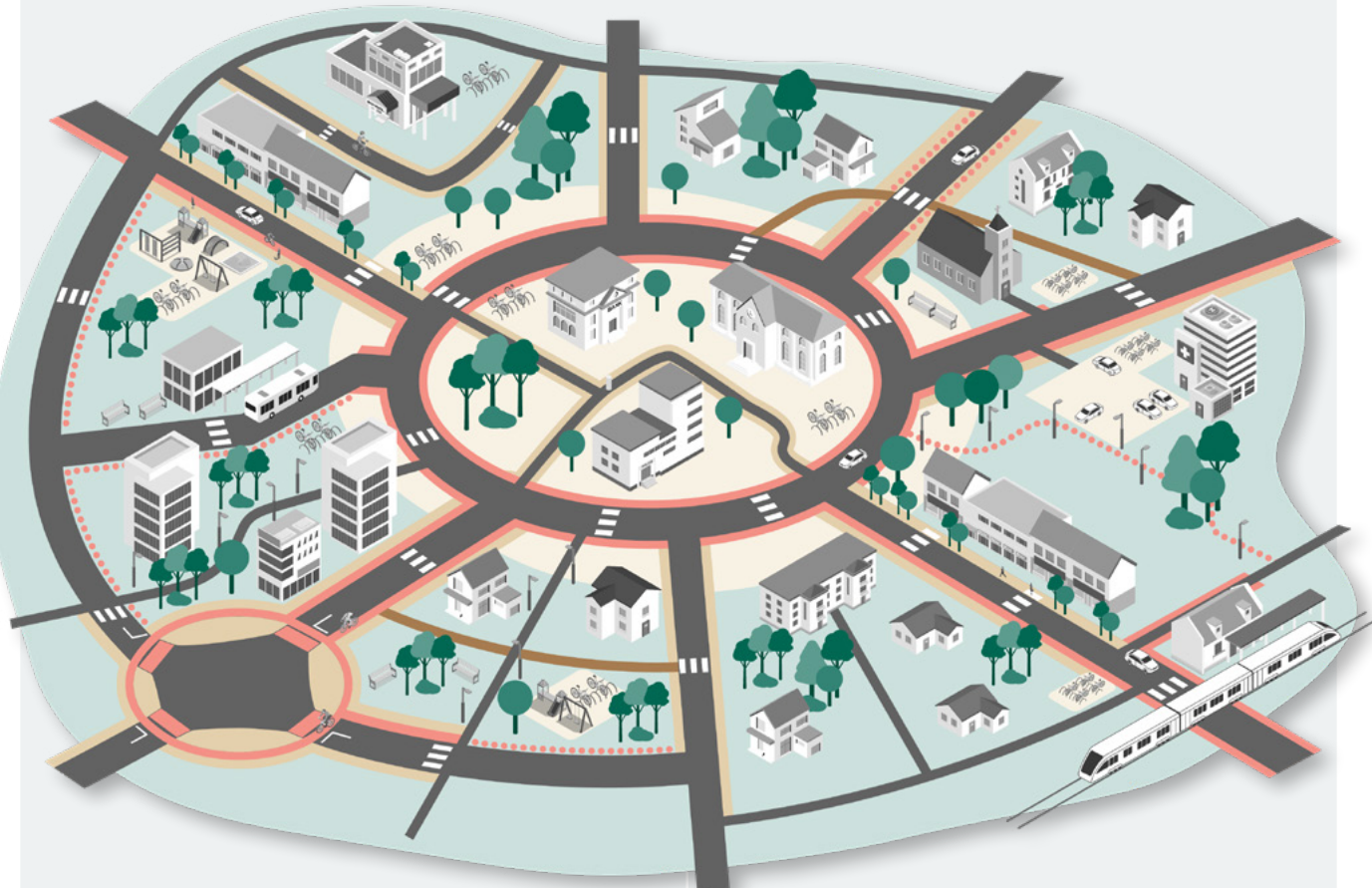


Area-wide traffic management



Traffic-free route

## High capability authority



Comprehensive planned network across **the whole area**



**England-leading proponents** of active travel, champions regional and national approaches



Delivers an **extensive developed network** of active travel infrastructure



**Comprehensive set of policies** in place to support and deliver an increase in active travel



Has delivered **a mix of low, medium and high LTN 1/20-compliant schemes**, including more innovative approaches (e.g. at complex junctions)



Delivered virtually all schemes on time

Policies that support and deliver an increase in active travel include:

- Local health and education policies.
- Proportionate road safety policies.
- Policies to improve accessibility of walking, cycling and public transport for disabled and older people.

# Case studies

## Case study 1: Milton Keynes City Council (moving from level 1 to 2)

Milton Keynes City Council has successfully delivered a wide range of high-quality active travel schemes from its Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan over the last two years.

The scheme chosen for final inspection under the ratings process reflected this by providing an attractive and accessible traffic-free route through a well-used local nature reserve. The scheme included crossing, lighting and placemaking improvements and has significantly enhanced the level of service for people walking, wheeling and cycling. Milton Keynes' continued commitment to the future delivery of such schemes across its network is also demonstrated by the updated Redway Design Manual, which aims to align the city's unique street network with national design guidance standards.

With a good track record in the delivery of Bikeability, behaviour change and wider revenue activities, Milton Keynes has showcased a balanced and effective approach to promoting active travel across the city. Combined with strong local leadership and increased levels of organisational capability, the City Council has provided sufficient evidence of a level 2 authority in this year's capability rating assessment.

### Milton Keynes City Council said:

"Over the past year, Milton Keynes City Council has worked in close partnership with regional representatives from ATE to shape a comprehensive package of interventions aimed at promoting walking, wheeling and cycling across our city.

"Regular engagement with ATE officers has been instrumental in helping us refine our schemes and initiatives. This collaboration has played a part in helping us to secure a Level 2 capability rating this year – an important milestone in our journey to becoming a more active travel-friendly city.

"We're excited to continue building on this momentum to promote sustainable transport in Milton Keynes. Our ongoing collaboration with ATE will help to further enhance our capability and to support us in the development of ambitious programmes designed to increase active trips year on year.

"At Milton Keynes City Council we aim to challenge the long-standing perception of Milton Keynes as a car-centric city and realise its considerable potential for increased levels of active travel."





## Case study 2: Nottinghamshire County Council (moving from level 1 to 2)

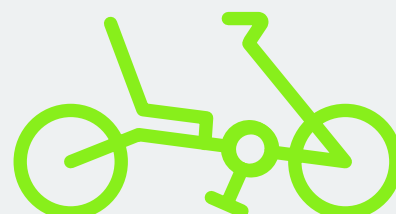
Nottinghamshire County Council provided good evidence in all areas, effectively demonstrating the necessary criteria to move up to a level 2 capability rating.

ATE's assessment process for this year's capability ratings placed an emphasis on scheme delivery. The evidence provided by Nottinghamshire was strong in this area, indicating a good record of scheme delivery and design quality in line with an authority operating at level 2 capability.

Two schemes were inspected, including one on the A611 Derby Road in Mansfield, next to Vision West Nottinghamshire College. Identified as a priority in the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, the scheme improved links between existing active travel routes by upgrading two junctions, installing a new pedestrian crossing, and building new footways and cycle tracks. The works improved walking and cycling connections to nearby homes, workplaces, and the college.

### Nottinghamshire County Council said:

"Nottinghamshire County Council has a clear vision: to create healthy, sustainable places for our communities. Our progress in improving our capability rating has been driven by strong collaboration at every level – from working closely with ATE to engaging local communities and design partners on all stages of scheme development and designs. This collective effort has helped us build high quality, supported, walking, wheeling and cycling schemes that meet local needs and deliver long-term benefits. It highlights how effective partnerships can transform the ambitions set out in Our Council Plan into real, measurable progress."



## Case study 3: Gloucestershire County Council (moving from level 2 to 3)

Gloucestershire County Council demonstrated strong commitment to expanding active travel provision across its largely rural landscape. The emerging 'Cycle Spine' is already delivering enhanced links to key towns and villages, with a plan to eventually provide access to half of Gloucestershire's population through a mix of new routes and paths.

Gloucestershire submitted two technically ambitious schemes for final inspection, showcasing their ambition and design capability through the delivery of over 3.6 miles of active travel infrastructure since December 2022. Both schemes form an integral part of the 9 miles of high-quality walking and cycling facilities already either delivered or under construction. Once complete this will form part of the planned 26-mile 'Gloucestershire Cycle Spine' delivered through ambitious multi-phase programmes, with funding from the Active Travel Fund, Levelling Up Fund, National Highways, the Walk Wheel Cycle Trust, Community Infrastructure Levy and local contributions. Gloucestershire demonstrated extensive stakeholder engagement, environmental coordination and adaptive design to reflect best practice in the development of these schemes. Successful delivery is underpinned by Gloucestershire's good partnership working with its six district councils.

ATE is pleased to endorse Gloucestershire's ambition with an increased rating to level 3 in the 2025 ratings.

### Gloucestershire County Council said:

"We're proud and delighted to be recognised as one of England's top-performing active travel authorities, especially as a rural council. Our close collaboration with ATE has significantly boosted our ability to deliver meaningful behaviour change campaigns and the ambitious 26-mile Gloucestershire Cycle Spine, which we plan to connect with more local walking, wheeling and cycling routes in the future. This achievement reflects our commitment to support sustainable growth, improve transport connections and promote healthier lifestyles across the county."





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