



Active
Travel
England

Worth every step



**Active Travel England's delivery plan
for a thriving nation 2026/27–2029/30**

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Foreword

Worth Every Step is Active Travel England's delivery plan to transform streets to make walking, wheeling and cycling the cheapest and easiest way to get from A to B.

Every step made on foot¹, wheeling² or cycling, delivers value — to the person making it, to the community around them, and to the economy.

Walking, wheeling and cycling for local trips improves our health, reduces pressure on our NHS, cuts congestion, and brings life to our high streets. It keeps money in our pockets, makes us happier and boosts our local economy. My time as transport commissioner in Greater Manchester laid the groundwork for a thriving walking and cycling network. This network serves as a foundation for the return of public transport to public control and has coincided with the city region currently boasting the fastest-growing economy in the UK.

Yet too many of our streets do not yet make those journeys feel safe, easy or inviting.

Worth Every Step will change that. And it starts with where we'll get the biggest impact. A more active school run and a high-quality, national network made up of local routes to high streets, workplaces and transport hubs.

Over the next four years and beyond, we will work alongside authorities and communities across England to create better streets and places to live, embedded into new homes from the outset, and we'll build the capability needed to make it last.

This delivery plan sets a clear, deliverable course for the agency.

We will work with delivery partners, building skills, providing expert design and planning advice, as well as strengthening the case for investment across local and national government. We will make it easier for authorities to succeed and will develop solutions to improve scheme monitoring and impact, as well as properly calculating the excellent value for money and efficiency of public investment that active travel can deliver.

It's time to make the cheapest and healthiest way to travel, the easiest way to travel. When streets work for people, everything else follows.

Chris Boardman

National Active Travel Commissioner

In 2024, congestion cost the UK economy around
£7.7 billion,
62 hours on average per road user.³



1. The National Travel Survey definition of walking also includes people using non-motorised wheelchairs.
2. Wheeling includes people who use wheelchairs and mobility scooters who may not identify with walking.
3. [INRIX 2024 Global Traffic Scorecard: London most congested city in Europe; congestion costing the UK £7.7 billion.](#)

Why this plan matters

The ambition at the heart of Worth Every Step, and Active Travel England, is straightforward: make walking, wheeling and cycling the cheapest, safest and easiest choice for everyday journeys.

Well-designed streets and neighbourhoods with built-in options for walking, wheeling and cycling can make a vast difference to everyday lives for communities. That's not just about how people get around, but also about how safe they feel, how children grow up, and how local economies thrive.

Not all streets deliver for people. That's why this government's Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy sets out ambitions for walking, wheeling and cycling, with a focus on better integration of active travel within the transport network, safer roads and improved health outcomes.

Active Travel England is central to achieving these ambitions, and Worth Every Step outlines how it plans to deliver for people.

Working alongside local authorities and communities, Active Travel England will raise standards in street design, build lasting local skills within councils, and make sure every pound of public investment delivers real value – with benefits that can be felt by everyone.

Lilian Greenwood

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State



Executive summary

Worth Every Step explains how ATE will support the Government's new Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS) 3, published in June 2026.

Vision

Our vision is for walking, wheeling and cycling to be an affordable, safe, and accessible choice for everyone. Our goal is to ensure that more people are making that choice every day.

Purpose

Raising standards in the design of streets and places, making everyday journeys easier, healthier and cheaper, is at the heart of everything we do.

All communities should have safe, accessible routes to walk, wheel and cycle.

We do this by collaborating with delivery partners, sharing best practice and advice, providing expert training, assuring quality, and sharing data and products to improve efficiency.

Strategic priorities

Over the next three years we will focus on three priorities.

These are:

- enable cheaper, safer, healthier journeys, particularly to school
- create healthier, better-connected new developments
- build local skills and capacity to plan, design and deliver high-quality initiatives

We will underpin this work by a fourth element focused on our own performance, ensuring we are an effective, trusted and high-performing agency.

8.8 billion

more miles are being driven around our homes (B and C roads) now than there were 10 years ago.⁴

Safer routes would encourage almost

3 in 5 people to walk more.⁵

4. [Road Traffic Statistics](#).

5. https://d3nkl3psvxpe9.cloudfront.net/documents/Results_for_Active_Travel_England_Walking_Women_Safety_Study_Feb_2026_70_27.2.2026.pdf.

Four-year roadmap

2026/27

Setting the direction

- agree data-sharing participation for all active travel funding
- launch new statutory planning consultation service
- develop a new plan to support our partners and streamline our design tools
- set baselines for monitoring impact and publish first performance metrics

2027/28

Streamlining our support

- publish the first national active travel network, including a baseline map
- streamline our statutory planning role to drive efficiencies
- expand our training offer including updated and streamlined products and services
- set up dedicated support teams to local authorities to help unblock stuck schemes and programmes

The **average yearly cost** of owning a car is

£3,502.⁶

More active local trips would **unlock the potential for families** to go from a two to a one-car household.

2028/29

Showing our impact

- deliver a digital mapping portal to show new and improved routes, including mapping existing, planned and funded active travel schemes
- showcase the communities benefitting from investment in better streets, places and routes to schools with increased levels of activity
- showcase the new housing developments that have been designed to give residents a genuine choice to walk, wheel or cycle local journeys
- build on our skills support to officers and councillors, including increased confidence and awareness of how to engage with communities, make evidence-based decisions, and deliver high-quality routes and places

2029/30

Realising results

- completion of schools routes programme
- simple side road zebra crossings being delivered nationwide
- consistent design of active travel wayfinding being rolled out
- comprehensive national network plans in place
- consistent national monitoring programme in place tracking what works

3 in 4 people from low-income households say that the cost of running a car makes it hard to afford other essentials.⁷

6. [Transport for London](#).

7. [IPPR](#).

Strategic context

This plan responds to the Government's third Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS3), including wider cross-government objectives to give local places greater decision making over funding.

This includes greater powers over public transport and improvements to integrated transport, supporting the vision set out in Better Connected: A Strategy for Integrated Transport.⁸ This is for transport to work well for people and be safe, reliable, affordable and accessible so they can get on in life and make the journeys they need to easily.

The plan also aligns to the principles of People, Place and Partnership set out in Better Connected and will make progress towards the nine priority areas informed by what people told us matters to them, including to make travel accessible and affordable, create healthier communities and align transport and development.

New housing delivery and plan-making require better street, network and route design, with enhanced placemaking via the new National Planning Policy Framework⁹ with an emphasis on vision-led planning rather than predict and provide.

There is also an emphasis on the cost of living, revitalising high streets and growing the economy.

These changes all point towards the importance of effective public investment in affordable transport choices. This requires consistent standards, a highly skilled workforce and a common evidence base across transport and planning. This delivery plan sets out how ATE will respond to these to enable more everyday walking, wheeling and cycling.

Walking, wheeling and cycling should be a practical, affordable and accessible transport option, particularly for short, everyday journeys – and as part of longer trips. Better streets, routes and placemaking support lower household costs, improve local places, increase children's independence and help people build physical activity into their daily routines.

Example cost savings

A family of four living in Manchester sell the second car they use for the school run and local trips and instead use bikes. **They save an estimated £17,107 over 10 years.**¹⁰

8. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/better-connected-a-strategy-for-integrated-transport>.

9. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>.

10. Volterra modelling for ATE, 2026.

Case study

How Greater Manchester's focus on walking, wheeling, cycling, integration with public transport, and enhanced public spaces has led to economic prosperity.

Since Greater Manchester launched its ambition to deliver the UK's largest walking and cycling network in 2018, the Bee Network now includes more than 160 kilometres of high-quality segregated routes, scores of safer walking and cycling routes to school, and hundreds of new or improved pedestrian crossings – many very close to schools. Within the next two years, Greater Manchester anticipates this network will exceed 180 kilometres.

This investment is paying off with the number of walking trips in Greater Manchester increasing by 23% from 2022 to 2024, and annual trips by cycling going up by 58% in the same period.

Since its introduction in 2021, the public bike hire scheme has recorded almost 2 million rides covering approximately 4 million kilometres.

When looking at perceptions of residents, half of residents now agree that Greater Manchester's transport network encourages them to walk or cycle as part of their trips. 72% say it's easy to combine walking and cycling with public transport (2024 figures). In addition, the proportion of people walking feeling safe from traffic both during the day and at night increased significantly in the same time period.

In the regional centre, Manchester and Salford's joint focus on public realm and place-making as well as the creation of new parks and people-focused open spaces has also contributed to the city-region having the fastest-growing economy in the UK.

In focus:

Greater Manchester examples: Altrincham, Trafford

In Altrincham, a town with around 50,000 residents, investment in walking, wheeling, cycling and place-making is helping to support a strong and growing town-centre economy.

Once a town with one of the highest number of empty shops in the country, Altrincham town centre welcomed 8.73 million visitors in 2025, while retail area the Stamford Quarter recorded more than 4.5 million visits. Better active travel routes and interchange connections are making it easier for residents, workers and visitors to reach shops, services, workplaces and leisure destinations without relying on a car, helping to sustain footfall and local spend.

There are many more case studies across all 10 GM boroughs, including:

- Oldham town centre – a multi-million pound transformation to add housing, retail and green space and increase dwell time by making the centre more walkable, alongside a new bus station
- Victoria North in Manchester – creating 15,000 new homes across 155 hectares with walking and cycling links embedded across the ongoing development
- Stockport's award-winning multi-modal transport Interchange which is playing a key role in the ongoing transformation of the town centre, plus improved walking and cycling links to the historic old town

Improve health and wellbeing

The Government's mission to improve health depends on making it easier for people to build physical activity into everyday life, supporting better physical and mental health and helping reduce long-term pressures on the health system.

High-quality active travel infrastructure, which is safe and accessible, is essential to achieving this.

ATE supports this mission by:

- producing national guidance for safety, accessibility and inclusivity so routes can be used confidently by people of all ages and abilities, with a focus on women and girls
- assuring schemes at key stages of development so public investment delivers infrastructure that people will use
- supporting local authorities to prioritise improvement to enable active everyday journeys to school, the high street and local amenities
- increasing awareness of the health impact of different interventions to support local decision making to maximise health benefits

Average cost of **yearly gym membership in the UK** is

£567.¹¹

The delivery of the government's targets would lead to

1.7 million

fewer GP appointments needed every year and

4.4 million

fewer sick days.¹²



11. <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2025/jan/25/best-gym-membership-deals-uk>.

12. ATE analysis based on data from the CWIS Investment Model and Active Modes Appraisal Toolkit.

Case study

Swapping a second car for bikes in Shropshire.

Alice, 37, from Shrewsbury, Shropshire, a nursery worker, and her teacher husband, Will, gave up their second car in 2021, saving them around £2,500 per year. The family now has a campervan, which they use for minimal trips, and a beloved cargo bike, as well as a bike for each family member – including their kids Mabel, 6, and Albert, 8.

Alice said:

“The savings are incredible - so much cheaper to have the odd bike service and new tyre rather than run a second car. But more than that it makes us feel healthier and happier and the kids love it. Most days we all cycle our own bikes to school or work. You cannot beat a morning cycle together as a family to get everyone off to a happy and healthy start to the day, come rain or shine. However the cargo bike is still invaluable for those days when little legs are tired or the weather is a bit grim!

“It is invaluable for longer journeys to play dates and parties or those which require extra luggage such as food shops and hockey matches.



“Basically, I try to avoid driving as much as possible, not just to save some pennies and keep our van young, but to keep ourselves active too!

“Whizzing past cars stuck in traffic is hugely satisfying too. It’s just about changing your mindset and you soon realise just how many of those short car journeys you can replace with a cycle. My kids even moan when I say we have to go in the car to get somewhere!

“We’ve never looked back. We would be lost without our bikes.”

If households gave up a second car entirely, **it could save families £17,342 over the 10 year period.** That’s around **£1,700 per year.**¹³

13. Volterra modelling for ATE, 2026.

Economic growth and cost of living

The Government's growth mission depends on productive places, efficient transport networks and thriving town centres.

High-quality active travel infrastructure plays a direct role in delivering all three. People who walk and cycle spend more money in local shops and enables the option of reducing household car ownership, saving money.

Active travel supports this mission by:

- improving access to jobs, education and services through delivering safe, reliable and attractive walking, wheeling and cycling routes
- supporting vibrant high streets and local economies by increasing footfall and dwell time
- helping active travel investment improve wider network performance by reducing congestion, utilising road space more efficiently and giving people the choice to take lower-cost journeys
- increasing understanding of how investment in active travel supports economic growth
- reducing annual household costs by owning one fewer car

Achieving the **CWIS3 walking and cycling outcomes** would deliver **long-term benefits to people's health, the environment and business** – over 40 years these are valued at around

£115 billion.¹⁴

Research shows those who **walk or wheel to shops spend more money**, and that pedestrianised **town centres experience higher sales.**¹⁵

14. ATE analysis based on data from the CWIS Investment Model and Active Modes Appraisal Toolkit.

15. https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/media/40gceeog/pedestrian_pound_summary.pdf.

Case study

Booming high streets in Bristol.

Louis owns Cotham Hill Barbers on Cotham Hill, a suburban area of Bristol.

Cotham Hill, a street densely populated with shops and cafés, was pedestrianised following a trial introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020–21, which closed sections to through traffic to support outdoor trading and safer movement for people.

Following public consultation and local support, Bristol City Council made the changes permanent. The scheme was funded through central government active travel funding through the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority.

The permanent scheme delivered new kerb alignments and paving, improved pedestrian crossings and drainage, revised junction layouts, formal loading and blue badge parking, retained cycle access, and public realm improvements such as planters, seating and cycle stands, creating a pedestrian-priority street environment.



Louis said:

“As with any change, I was worried at first but the impact on my barber shop has been really great. We now get more walk-ins and people come here as a destination and a place to visit several of the shops and cafés. The street is now more alive with people and the businesses here communicate more as one big family.”



Build more homes and create better places

Delivering new homes at scale requires places that are healthy, attractive, inclusive and well connected. Retrofitting active travel into poorly planned developments is costly and often ineffective.

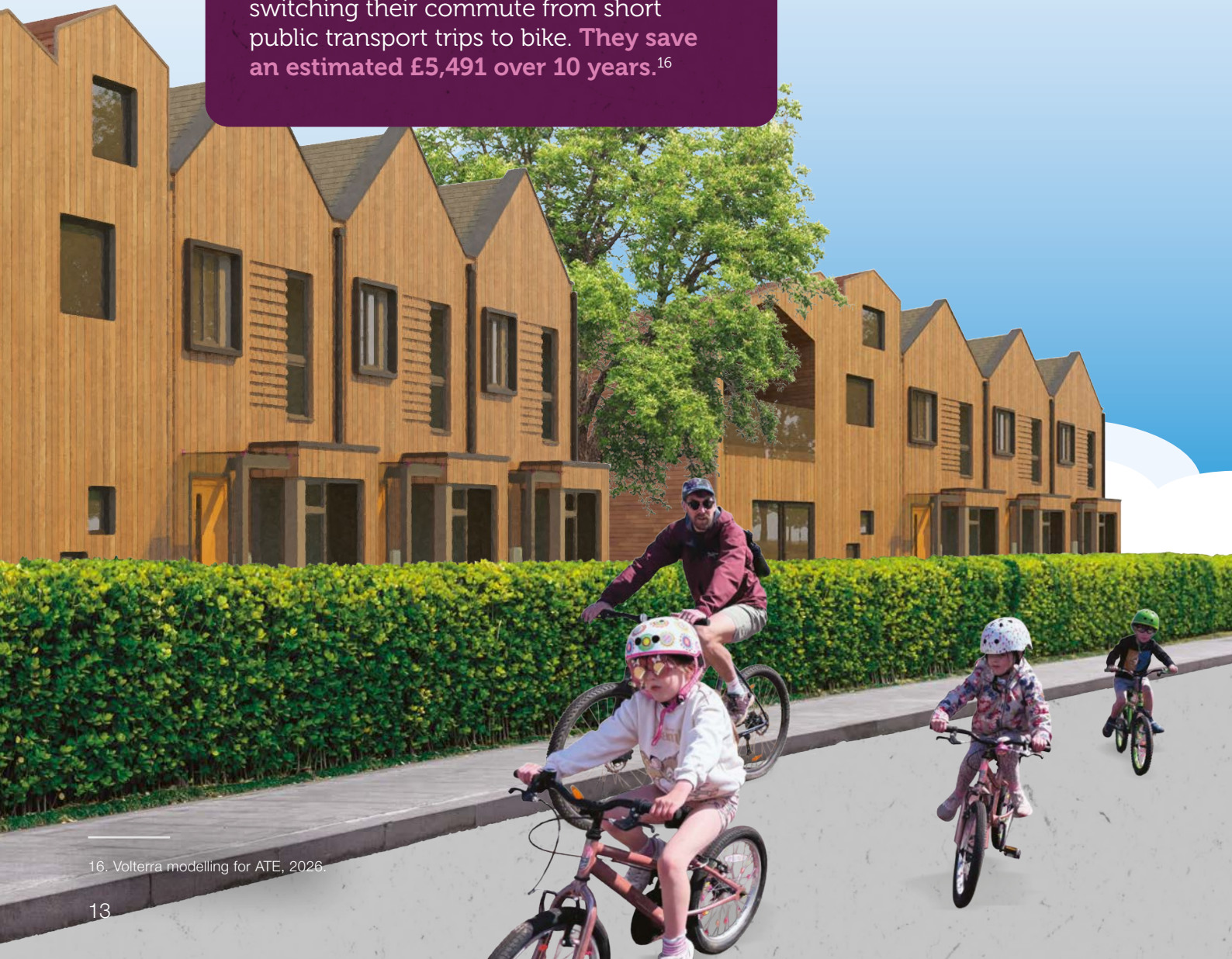
ATE supports housing and place-making ambitions by:

- providing expert advice and guidance through the planning system so active travel is considered early in local plans, spatial plans and development proposals
- supporting a shift towards vision-led planning where transport, health, environmental and economic outcomes are designed in from the start

Helping local authorities and developers create neighbourhoods where everyday journeys made safely on foot, by wheelchair or by cycle have a range of benefits. These include reduced car dependency, improved air quality, and neighbourhoods that are safer for children and more attractive to residents, employers and investors.

Example cost savings

An older professional in Exeter buys a bike, switching their commute from short public transport trips to bike. **They save an estimated £5,491 over 10 years.**¹⁶



16. Volterra modelling for ATE, 2026.

Case study

Marmalade Lane, a 42-home development in Cambridge, is laid out in terraces, creating attractive, people-friendly streets to the front with gardens behind.

The residents of Marmalade Lane come from all ages and walks of life and include families with young children, retired couples and young professionals. There are many nationalities in the community and residents, including both longstanding Cambridge residents and those who have moved from elsewhere to join the community.

Car parking is kept to the periphery and bins in communal stores, conserving the outside space for people's enjoyment.

Homes are contemporary versions of the townhouses and low-rise apartments traditional to Cambridge, and are finished in one of four brick colours with generous porches, balconies and private gardens.

Marmalade Lane is located next to a stop on the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway and close to a nexus of important cycle ways which provide fast and direct access by sustainable travel modes to Cambridge city centre (15 minutes by bike), the new Cambridge North railway station (10 minutes by bike) and other destinations. Cambridge Science Park is within a short walk.

Within Marmalade Lane, there is enough secure cycle parking for all residents. There is a growing car share pool with an electric car and one other car to help residents reduce their car ownership. The community runs a shared electric cargo trike scheme for the wider Orchard Park community which many residents use.

ATE has reviewed
planning applications for

**900,000
new homes**

– giving two million more
people better active travel
choices from their front door.¹⁷

Photo by David Butler.

17. ATE figures.

Delivery targets in the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy

CWIS3 sets national targets and outcomes for walking, wheeling and cycling in England.

CWIS3 sets out objectives to increase walking, wheeling and cycling, with the aim of boosting physical activity and health, improving road safety, and making active travel easier and better integrated with public transport.

The first four years of CWIS3 (up to 2030) focuses on enabling more children to walk, wheel and cycle to school alongside building the foundations of a national network to improve the consistency and quality of active travel infrastructure. This delivery plan responds directly to these priorities alongside fulfilling ATE's statutory responsibilities in the planning system and enabling work in building skills and capacity in the sector to deliver.

Delivery of these outcomes depends primarily on decisions made by local and combined authorities and their delivery partners.

ATE's role is to enable and assure delivery at scale by:

- providing statutory advice through the planning system so active travel is designed in early
- assuring the quality of schemes where public funding is used, to ensure value for money
- building officer skills and confidence to plan and deliver high-quality networks
- strengthening the evidence base and improving the availability and use of data

The target in CWIS3 is:

- 55% of all short parts of a journey (short stages) in towns and cities to be walked or cycled by 2035¹⁸ (up from 48% today)



18. Progress towards this target will be measured using the annual National Travel Survey which will monitor the proportion of all stages under 5 miles that are walked and cycled by residents within towns and cities. A new stage is defined when there is a change in the form of transport or when there is a change of vehicle requiring a separate ticket. 'Towns and cities' include both rural and urban areas and are defined using the official census rural-urban classification and include urban: nearer to a major town or city, urban: further from a major town or city, larger rural: nearer to a major town or city and larger rural: further from a major town or city.

The outcomes set out in CWIS are:

- 5.3 million more people being physically active through active travel¹⁹
- 2.2 billion more short walking stages in towns and cities²⁰
- 0.6 billion more short cycling stages in towns and cities²¹
- decreased fatalities and serious injuries per billion miles walked and cycled, in line with the Road Safety Strategy targets to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on British roads by 65%, and 70% for children, by 2035
- decreased percentage of people citing personal safety concerns when walking, wheeling and cycling
- 60% of children aged 5 to 16 to usually walk or cycle to school by 2035 (up from 46%²²)

ATE will rely on data from local authorities, national data sources, internal data sets and bespoke research to track changes in activity, safety, accessibility and delivery.

Service offer to local authorities

Our service offer will include:

- early conversations to shape ideas and prioritise the right interventions
- training and professional development
- co-design and assurance support for network plans and scheme development
- planning advice through statutory and spatial plan services
- design review and technical assurance tools
- scheme monitoring support
- national behaviour change programmes
- case studies and shared learning to show what works

Delivering the Government's Cycling and Walking Investment strategy could lead to

2,500 fewer
all-cause mortality deaths
by 2035.²³

19. These projections are based on data from the CWIS Investment Model and Active Modes Appraisal Toolkit and are cumulative across the period between 2025 and 2035. The projection shows the maximum possible impact on physical activity as it does not account for displacement of other activities or the proportion of new walkers and cyclists that are already physically active since neither of these are known. Progress towards this outcome will be monitored annually through the Active Lives Survey through the proportion of the population who both take part in active travel at least twice in the last 28 days and are considered active. Intervention-specific evaluations will be required to understand the impact of investment in active travel on physical activity.

20. In line with the National Travel Survey, walking includes all travel on foot. It is also used when people use non-motorised wheelchairs, prams or pushchairs, as well as when they ride on toy bicycles, rollerskates, skateboards, non-motorised scooters, or when they jog.

21. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-travel-survey-2024/nts-2024-active-travel>.

22. NTS0615.

23. ATE analysis based on data from the CWIS Investment Model and Active Modes Appraisal Toolkit.

5,000

new routes
to schools.

2,500

deaths avoided.

Worth every

10,000

new simple
zebra crossings.



£1,700

per year saved
if second car is
given up.

Increased

footfall and high street
spending.

1.7 million

fewer GP visits every year.

step

30% less

risk of depression.

Strategic priorities (2026/27–2029/30)

This section sets out what ATE will prioritise over the course of the delivery plan.

Progress will be monitored using the Local Performance Indicators and ATE Key Performance Indicators set out in the Performance section.

SP1: Enable cheaper, safer, healthier journeys, particularly to school

Outcome: More people walking, wheeling and cycling with a focus on the school run.

Overview: We will work to improve streets and places so that they are safer to walk, wheel and cycle. This will be done by improving the quality and consistency of new routes with better connections to other transport networks, giving people the skills and opportunity to change how they travel.

What ATE will do:

- work with mayoral teams to develop 3,500 miles of safer routes to schools and public transport hubs²⁴, providing design expertise to support delivery
- provide a school's support package, including a new safe routes to schools programme that supports cycle training as well as incentive programmes
- help every town and city to have a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan
- publish new guidance including a rural design guide and guidance on women and girls' walking safety
- deliver a national active travel network, including a digital map to bring together existing, planned and proposed routes to help local delivery, improving reporting and collaboration
- support the development of consistent active travel national wayfinding to make it easier for people to navigate local journeys and find routes
- support local transport authorities with their Local Transport Delivery Plans, including maintenance programmes
- collect sufficient programme and scheme data to assure value for money and progress towards national and local targets
- support authorities to embed emerging legislation changes for traffic signs and road markings, which will include new, simpler side road zebra crossings and pavement parking
- continue to invest in the upgrade and maintenance of the National Cycle Network, prioritising sections that connect people to education, jobs, new housing sites, or reduce physical inactivity
- develop a framework for assessing the quality and connectivity of walking, wheeling and cycling routes to rail stations and mass transit, as well as cycle parking provision, in line with best practice approaches for safety and accessibility²⁵

24. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/englands-mayors-gather-to-pledge-national-walking-wheeling-and-cycling-network-backed-by-government>.

25. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/better-connected-a-strategy-for-integrated-transport>.

Case study

Kesgrave High School, Suffolk.

Kesgrave High School, near Ipswich in Suffolk, has been nationally recognised for its exceptional sustainable travel levels among students. Approximately 86% of its 1,800 students commute by walking or cycling. That amounts to about 18,000 active trips each week.

Kesgrave is an example of how combining simple, targeted infrastructure, school buy-in (parking) and community support enhances lives – much more widely than just that of the pupils.

If just 100 other schools across England were able to achieve the same outcomes, 41,500 more children would be active every year, with 16 million fewer car journeys on local roads at peak time (saving 3,300 tons of carbon).

If 1,000 schools followed suit – around 5% of primary and secondary schools – it would mean 400,000 children being more active and independent, and 160 million fewer car journeys each year.



SP2: Create healthier, better connected new developments

Outcome: New developments are planned and designed to enable walking, wheeling and cycling from the start.

Overview: We will work to improve new developments including New Towns, so the location, design and delivery of homes, schools, services and associated roads, paths and spaces will give future residents a real choice to walk, wheel and cycle for local journeys.

What ATE will do:

- support the flagship New Towns Programme to build in active travel choices from the start
- run a Development Management Service in line with new statutory requirements
- deliver a new Spatial Plan Service, in line with statutory requirements, to support the development of Local Plans and Spatial Development Strategies that meet local and national ambition on active travel
- publish case studies and research to demonstrate where ATE support has had a positive impact
- publish supplementary planning advice on school active travel, cycle parking and street adoptions and promote street, route and public realm standards in line with national guidance
- evidence the effectiveness of active travel social prescribing as a means of improving the health of patients through increased physical activity

SP3: Build local skills and capacity to plan, design and deliver high-quality initiatives

Outcome: Local transport authorities and other delivery bodies have the skills to plan, design and deliver high-quality routes alongside effective community engagement programmes.

Overview: This work will equip the sector to deliver what is needed to make it cheaper, safer and easier for people to walk, wheel and cycle.

What ATE will do:

- support local authorities to navigate devolution including developing effective schemes and initiatives in line with local and national ambitions
- upskill local authority officers and leaders by providing training, tools and peer learning opportunities to build skills and confidence, including through our national Making Active Places conference
- conduct local authority Active Travel Capability Ratings²⁶ on a regular cycle to inform multi-year funding settlements and targeted support
- increase participation of under-represented groups in active travel schemes by supporting local authorities with training and guidance on how to engage different audiences and develop effective programmes
- conduct research and evaluation, sharing findings to improve delivery
- work with transport delivery partners, such as National Highways, National Park Authorities, Port and Airport Authorities to adopt a best practice approach to active travel delivery



26. <https://www.activetravelengland.gov.uk/resources/capability-ratings>.

SP4: Operate as an effective, trusted and high-performing agency

Outcome: ATE builds on its successes to further its reputation as a credible, efficient and expert national agency with strong governance, skilled people, effective systems and a culture of continuous improvement.

Overview: ATE will work to provide the products and services its customers and the wider sector needs to increase walking, wheeling and cycling.

What ATE will do:

- strengthen governance and accountability with clear senior responsible owners, portfolio oversight and consistent reporting
- implement our people and location approach so that we can recruit and retain talented staff and provide regionally focused support
- invest in staff upskilling through training, mentoring and knowledge sharing
- deliver the actions in our equality impact assessment to drive improvements across our programmes for people with protected characteristics
- gather feedback through an annual customer survey and use it to improve our services

Example cost savings

A young professional living in Southampton gives up the car they use for the commute and to travel to football and uses the bike they own instead. They cancel their gym membership.

They save an estimated £16,177 over 10 years.²⁷

27. Volterra modelling for ATE, 2026.

How we work, and how it will change

ATE is a small agency and most effective when enabling delivery.

This partnership with local authorities is changing because of devolution and what we have learned in the first three years of operation. This means leaning more into capability building, providing guidance, advice and tools to deliver consistent, higher quality programmes.

Our ways of working include:

- Active Intelligence: collecting data and sharing insights to show real-world impact
- Active Collaboration: convening partners to get it right first time for the benefit of all
- Active Expertise: empowering partners with tools, guidance and skills to succeed

This means our assurance work for street schemes and new housing developments captures the lessons of what works and turns them into digital products to help the sector develop consistent design from the outset, linking to a network approach.

Our primary customers are local transport authorities, highway authorities and combined authorities, including Mayoral Strategic Authorities. We have a statutory role in the planning system, working closely with developers and local planning authorities to ensure smooth and efficient advice and consultation responses. We will also work to equip private sector transport businesses that support local delivery with the same knowledge.

To better help local partners deliver their programmes, we will move to a regional structure to help build teams within authorities. We will also empower them to do their own design assurance work using digital tools and design assurance processes.

Case study

Intensive support has helped West of England authorities on scheme delivery.

An ATE Inspector was seconded to West of England Combined Authority during 2024/25 to help officers with the design and delivery of several region-wide walking, wheeling and cycling routes. The 12-month secondment allowed the ATE Inspector to provide hands-on practical help with a range of routes and has led to faster delivery on the ground.

We will collaborate across the Department for Transport family and other government departments and agencies. Active travel supports a range of shared government objectives including health, growth, housing and public safety.

We also rely on many delivery partners for our national programmes on delivering cycle training to children, improving the National Cycle Network and delivering a variety of community engagement activity which enables more people to be active.

With ATE expert support, authorities have delivered active travel schemes at more than **twice the rate** of other small transport schemes.²⁸

ATE is one of the top performers in terms of statutory consultee response times nationally, with **98% of planning applications responded to on time.**²⁹

28. ATE figures.

29. Figures held by ATE.

Backed by evidence

There is clear evidence that a focus on design quality, funding levers, training and assurance activities lead to more walking, wheeling and cycling; safer streets; healthier populations; and economic benefits.

It is underpinned by ATE's evidence assessments³⁰, which show that high-quality, connected infrastructure increases rates of walking and cycling, especially where routes are safe, accessible and easy to use.

Evidence shows that early consideration of active travel in planning and design has a lasting influence on travel behaviour. This supports ATE's statutory planning roles and our focus on delivery assurance and building capability in local authorities, enabling them to do this as standard as part of all transport and housing improvements.

Behaviour change programmes are most effective when delivered alongside high-quality infrastructure such as smooth footways, protected junctions, quiet roads, segregated cycle lanes and off-road routes. This reinforces ATE's combined focus on infrastructure quality, spatial planning influence, capability building and evaluation.

Road and social safety, both perceived and actual, are critical determinants of behaviour, particularly for groups who are currently underrepresented in active travel. This is why our standards and assurance focus on safe, inclusive streets and places, making up coherent networks.

The CWIS3 outcomes can only be achieved by collaborative working with local transport authorities. Where active travel improvements are made, ATE will work with authorities to ensure there is sufficient data to track performance.

Therefore, for each strategic priority in this plan, we will use Local Performance Indicators to show the things that work and make things happen but rely on others to deliver. We will monitor these and can move resources to help bolster certain areas when required. We will also have a set of internal Key Performance Indicators to help ensure that our services are being delivered effectively.

Example cost savings

A retired couple with two cars give one car up. They walk more for their short local trips.

They save an estimated £8,361 over 10 years.³¹

30. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluating-the-impact-of-active-travel-investment>.

31. Volterra modelling for ATE, 2026.

Case study

Sam, Middleton, Greater Manchester.

Sam, 20, uses public transport and walking as a way to get around. He uses the bus for longer trips but walks for local journeys, including visiting his Dad who lives one mile away.

Sam said:

“Not everyone can afford a car, especially young people. It would be a huge burden. I think more and more people don’t want to have to rely on cars as transport. I like walking and getting the bus or tram. It keeps me fit, makes me happy and it is cheap. Making our streets better for people sounds like a good idea to me.”



Case study

How Liverpool has used traffic counters to show impact.

Liverpool City Region has focused on growing its evidence base on the transport network. Since 2019, the authority has installed 290 traffic monitoring sensors across the region.

The sensors have a wide range of capabilities, including e-scooter detection, counts and speeds. This has allowed Liverpool City Region to optimise data collection and select locations that support use cases beyond active travel.

All of its sensors provide multi-modal data on traffic flows and path movements. The counter data is informing the City Region’s active travel network pipeline.

Comparing before and after data on one of the city’s new segregated routes showed a notable increase in active travel users as a result of the new design. Daily cyclist numbers almost doubled (+91%) and the number of pedestrians went up by 47%. The proportion of active travel makes up 4.4% at the site, up from 2.3%.



Equality, inclusion and accessibility

Active Travel England is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010.

In exercising its functions, ATE must have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations for people with protected characteristics.

Equality considerations are embedded in policy design, funding decisions, regulation, and engagement with local authorities, supported where appropriate by equality impact assessments.

We will support local authorities to improve design and apply guidance, providing assurance in ways that support inclusive, accessible journeys.

We will work to influence the infrastructure and public realm that we help to deliver to work for all people, including disabled and older people, children, women and girls, and groups who currently feel less safe travelling in public spaces.

When we design our public spaces and transport networks so that they are accessible to marginalised groups, they will be accessible to all. To achieve this, we need transport and building professionals to advocate and adopt this mindset.

9 in 10 women

have reported feeling unsafe when walking alone after dark.³²

Two countries that have consistently invested in walking, wheeling and cycling routes – **the Netherlands and Denmark** – regularly top the UN wellbeing index.³³



32. Source: [YouGov polling commissioned by ATE](#), February 2026.

33. Source: UN WellBeing index.

Resources and funding

ATE supports delivery within the Department for Transport's wider transport funding landscape.

Local authorities and combined authorities determine priorities for their areas through devolved settlements and local transport planning.

CWIS3 sets out a projection of the total financial resources across government that may be invested in active travel over the period of the strategy of £4.555 billion. Most of the funding is devolved to local transport authorities. This could increase or decrease depending on local decisions.

We will help authorities to achieve the active travel objectives set out in their local plans.

Our role is to ensure that where active travel is delivered, it represents value for money, is designed in line with national guidance, and contributes to safe, coherent, local networks. We will align our services, training and delivery activities to the priorities in this plan and review our resourcing annually.

Measuring our success

This plan uses indicators to track progress towards national and local outcomes. ATE controls its own internal key performance indicators and influences local indicators and national targets and outcomes.

Local Performance Indicators

ATE will use local performance indicators to track changes in delivery, impact and behaviour at local and regional levels, using a combination of local data, national datasets and bespoke research. They help show whether progress is being made on the ground and where additional support may be needed.

The indicators are split into two sections: leading and lagging indicators. Leading indicators track the conditions that enable delivery, such as capability, adoption of standards, data sharing and programme readiness.

They change earlier and help indicate whether delivery is on track. Lagging indicators track outcomes that take longer to materialise, such as changes in behaviour, network use and safety.

Both are necessary: leading indicators help ATE and partners intervene early, while lagging indicators show whether investment is delivering the intended long-term outcomes.

Leading indicators

Participation in active travel behaviour change activities

We will ask Authorities to report on the number of people engaged in behaviour change programmes which aim to have a positive impact on mode shift towards active travel. Measures in this year will establish a baseline and track progress over time.

Engagement with ATE services and learning resources

As ATE offers more services and learning resources to support active travel delivery we will track the uptake of those services and resources and aim to achieve a consistently high satisfaction rate.

Adoption of best practice guidance and tools by planning authorities

We will track the adoption of Department for Transport street design guidance as local standards and the use of ATE guidance in planning consultations.

Transport Authority Active Travel Capability

Through measures such as the Active Travel England Capability Ratings, we will establish a baseline for the capability of all transport authorities in England and track their progress over time.

Authority engagement with ATE through data sharing

Authorities will be asked to share cost and design data with Active Travel England, to allow us to support them in their active travel delivery and to enable us to provide national level insight and share examples of best practice. Tracking a basket of measures, including requests for design reviews and reporting of scheme spend and delivery will enable us to establish a baseline and track performance against national ambition.

Lagging indicators

Through the integrated settlements outcomes performance frameworks³⁴, local authorities are being asked to set local delivery targets. This includes the number of additional journeys walked and cycled and the number of new and improved kilometres of active travel infrastructure.

We will develop methods to track the number of kilometres of active travel infrastructure, regardless of funding source. Through the roll-out of counters we will measure how new infrastructure increases use. We will also consider the road safety impact of infrastructure and how many more people are becoming physically active.

Internal Key Performance Indicators

These KPIs measure how effectively ATE is performing its enabling role – for example, whether we are providing timely advice, assurance and support to partners, and whether our services are helping local authorities to deliver high-quality programmes.

Taken together, these measures provide a clear line of sight from national ambition, through local delivery, to ATE's own performance as a national agency:

- percentage of first responses to planning applications within statutory deadlines (99%)
- percentage of substantive responses to Local Plan consultations outside London (90%)
- percentage of ATE prioritised schemes assured for design quality (95%)
- employee engagement score (77%)
- correspondence response times (85%)
- ATE customer satisfaction (75%)
- volume of learners accessing ATE learning products (3,000 pa)

34. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/integrated-settlements-outcomes-frameworks-for-2025-to-2026>.

Governance and risks

Each strategic priority will have a senior responsible owner and clear programme accountability. We will run quarterly portfolio reviews and maintain an active risk and issue register.

This will include:

- data quality and refresh arrangements
- capacity and capability constraints in local authorities
- alignment between devolved funding decisions and national ambition
- adoption of standards and consistent application in scheme design
- clarity for partners about roles and responsibilities

We will mitigate these risks through clear guidance, shared evidence, targeted support and transparent reporting of progress against targets and milestones.

ATE is reliant on partners to deliver safe and accessible infrastructure. Delivering this infrastructure is fundamental to addressing the public's concern about road safety. Therefore, we will monitor delivery programmes to assess whether we are on track to meet targets.



Our values

Our values aren't just words on a page. They underpin everything we do and are integral to defining who we are as an executive agency.

Evolving

We are a young organisation, and we will learn from our mistakes as we mature.

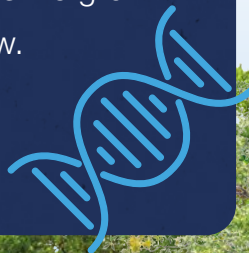
We can experiment, learn, and adapt without fear of failure.

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.



Our Year 1 Delivery Plan 2026-2027 in detail

This is the first annual delivery plan for 2026/27 that supports the longer-term priorities to 2030, as set out earlier in the document. An updated delivery plan will be published for each subsequent year.

Strategic Priority	Objective for 26/27
SP1	Invest in active travel infrastructure through £626 million investment in local authorities and the National Cycle Network
SP1	Deliver a Floating Bus Stop Remediation programme and further research ³⁵
SP1	Publish new Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan guidance
SP1	Publish new Rural Design Guide
SP1	Create the foundations of the approach, including a digital platform, for the National Active Travel Network
SP1	Continue investment in the Bikeability cycle training programme while also supporting authorities to develop an active travel to school programme
SP2	Run a Development Management Service in line with new statutory requirements
SP2	Deliver a new Spatial Plan Service in line with statutory requirements to support the development of Local Plans and Spatial Plans
SP2	Publish case studies and research to demonstrate where ATE input has improved outcomes
SP3	Plan for the delivery of the 2027 capability ratings, utilising data available from devolved funding arrangements
SP3	Deliver our commitment of new practical guidance and training to help councils revamp streets, making them safer for women and girls
SP3	Support DfT to deliver new design guidance, namely a new Manual for Streets and associated technical annexes
SP3	Provide support to local authorities through support for design assurance, and training for local authority officers and elected representatives
SP3	Deliver the Making Active Places 2026 conference where we will showcase the latest UK government policy, guidance and industry developments in placemaking and active travel
SP3	Conduct research on the use of illegal e-bikes to inform potential new approaches to enhance safety for riders and other road users
SP4	Deliver commitments in our People Plan and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan to continue to build a workplace where our staff feel respected, safe and supported and can thrive
SP4	Ensuring high quality governance and decision-making is in place through supporting the National Active Travel Commissioner and delivering effective collaboration with Ministers and DfTc
SP4	Deliver enhancements to our project and portfolio management across the agency to track progress on our delivery against this plan
SP4	Invest in our internal digital infrastructure to create a single, integrated system used across the agency and deliver efficiencies with how we deliver our services

35. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/better-connected-a-strategy-for-integrated-transport>.

Financial resources 2026-2027

£000s	Resource	Capital
Pay Costs	9,877	
Non-Pay Costs	44,911	32,420
Total	54,788	32,420
Breakdown on Non-Pay Costs:		
Research		1,350
Digital	387	
Staff Related	279	
Other	1,799	
Grants	42,446	31,070



Closing remarks

As Chief Medical Officer for England, I am extremely supportive of everyday walking, wheeling and cycling, and its key role in supporting the Government's health mission.

Increasing physical activity plays a key role in improving health. The greatest health gain from physical activity comes from those who do none, starting to do some, and those who do some increasing their level of activity.

Walking, wheeling and cycling are great ways to incorporate physical activity to everyday life, across the life course – to encourage this we must make routes practical, safe and equitable.

Active Travel England's work is important in delivering this, and it is encouraging to see this set out in Worth Every Step.

Professor Sir Chris Whitty
Chief Medical Officer

As a nation we are

20% less active

now than we were in the 1960s,
which will rise to **35%** by 2030.³⁶

Physical inactivity is associated with

1 in 6 deaths

in the UK and costs the UK almost

£7.4 billion a year

(of which almost £1 billion is to
the NHS alone).³⁷



36. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-applying-all-our-health/physical-activity-applying-all-our-health#understanding-local-needs>.

37. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-applying-all-our-health/physical-activity-applying-all-our-health>.

