Investment in cycling can help save our planet: **but time is running out**

cyclinguk.org/COP26
Transport emissions: decades of inaction

Global heating and a chaotic climate is here now and will only get worse unless greenhouse gas emissions are urgently reduced. Cycling could play a key role, but time is running out.

Climate change can be daunting – as it’s a global problem with complex solutions, so we can easily lose sight of simple things the UK’s governments and councils can do to drastically reduce climate-destroying greenhouse gas emissions.

Since 1990, the UK has made genuine progress in reducing some emissions – with a 44% drop across all sectors. However, significantly more needs to be done to reduce emissions to ‘net-zero’, where we absorb as much greenhouse gas as we emit.

And while some sectors have made reasonable progress over this period, such as the 66% reduction in emissions from energy supply, when it comes to transport, progress has been virtually non-existent: emissions have fallen by just 4.6% in the past 30 years – an average reduction of just 0.15% each year.

As a result, domestic transport is now the UK’s biggest polluting sector, accounting for 27% of greenhouse gas emissions. Over 90% of this comes from road transport – cars, vans, and other motor vehicles.

Continuing at the current rate of reduction, it would take a staggering 600 years to reduce the UK’s transport emissions to zero.

The current approach is failing, but it doesn’t have to be this way.
This machine fights climate change

There’s no single solution to this problem, but there is a simple piece of technology which offers huge potential to reduce transport emissions. It was invented over 200 years ago: the bicycle.

52% of all journeys under 5 miles are made by car – that’s anywhere from a 5-minute to a 25-minute cycle. The potential for reducing emissions is huge: in towns and cities, where cycling is often just as quick as driving, making one less car trip and one more bike trip per day has been found to decrease life cycle CO₂ emissions from transport by around 67%.

Yet cycling receives a fraction of the investment of major roads projects and, as a result, most of the UK lacks safe, protected space for cycling. It’s therefore no wonder that many people in the UK believe our roads are “too dangerous for them to cycle on”, and cycling uptake is so low.

The evidence shows this is not a complex issue to address – building networks of safe, high-quality, protected cycle lanes is proven time and again to significantly increase the number of people who cycle for short journeys, or as part of longer ones.

Cycle lanes are relatively cheap to build and offer a huge and quick return on investment, not just tackling climate change, but also keeping people fit, healthy, and active.

Whichever way you cut it, when it comes to reducing greenhouse gasses, active travel, including cycling, walking, and wheeling, is one of the few remaining ‘low hanging fruits’ ripe to be plucked from the tree.

It’s time for action:

• our national governments across the UK must rapidly increase investment in active travel to at least 10% of transport spending, and commit to increase investment further to reduce motor traffic and get millions more people cycling

• councils, where they have the power to do so, must use that funding and prioritise active travel, planning, and delivering active travel networks.

The message is simple: this machine can fight climate change. But we need your help.
Join our movement – for COP26 and beyond

If you want to join us in demanding action, visit cyclinguk.org/COP26 to find out how to get involved in ‘Pedal on COP’ feeder rides and other activities during COP26.

Of course, the urgency of tackling climate change won’t go away after COP26. Getting more people cycling – and making cycling safer for everyone – is central to Cycling UK’s mission and our campaign work, but we can only achieve this by raising our voices up together – and we need your support.

If you want to be part of this journey and champion cycling for everyone, then join our rapidly growing Cycle Advocacy Network, where you can link up with other local campaigners, find resources to help you secure positive local change, and raise your voice for cycling in your community.

Visit cyclinguk.org/CAN to find out more.

Reducing carbon emissions – how does enabling cycling compare?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>CO₂ Emissions/day</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cycling a 2.5-mile (20 min) commute and back, instead of driving</td>
<td>1.1kgCO₂/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switching to a renewable energy provider, per person</td>
<td>0.6kgCO₂/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retrofitting insulation to an average home, per person</td>
<td>0.58kgCO₂/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planting 10 trees (once fully grown)</td>
<td>0.68kgCO₂/day</td>
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77% of people support measures in their local area to encourage cycling and walking.
Who we are

Cycling UK, the UK's cycling charity, imagines a world where the streets are free of congestion and the air is clean to breathe, where parents encourage their children to cycle to school and everyone shares the exhilaration of being in the saddle. For more than 140 years, we've been making our streets safer, opening up new traffic-free routes and inspiring more people to cycle more often.

For more information please contact us:
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cyclinguk.org/COP26

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