



Cycling UK information pack for election candidates

**Answers to common questions about
cycling**

General election 2024

Dear candidate,

Cycling UK has created this pack to give you the facts and responses to typical questions that may come up on the doorstep, enabling you to understand and confidently talk about the benefits of investing in cycling and walking whilst out on the campaign trail and beyond.

If you have any further questions, feedback or suggestions to improve this information pack, please get in touch: campaigns@cyclinguk.org

Bustling high streets you can walk down whilst breathing clean air. Millions more children walking and cycling to school, because they and their parents feel it's a safe option. A healthier nation, with more people building movement into their daily lives.

That's Cycling UK's vision for the UK, but to get there the next government must invest in active travel, giving people real choices for how they move and go about their daily lives.

Polls show that investing in active travel is popular

Whether it be giving people transport choices, reducing emissions and air pollution, tackling the climate crisis, rejuvenating our high streets and town centres, or easing the pressure on our national health services, **investing in cycling and walking has not only wide-ranging benefits, but wide-ranging support as well:**

- **[2020 YouGov survey, commissioned by Cycling UK:](#)**
 - 56% supported active travel schemes being introduced all over the UK (e.g. cycle lanes, restricting through motor traffic in residential areas and 20mph limits) – only 19% opposed.
 - Yet respondents assumed public support was lower (33%) and opposition much higher (29%).
- **[2020 YouGov #BikeisBest survey:](#)**
 - 77% support measures in their local area to encourage cycling and walking.
 - 80% who expressed a preference want the UK's streets redesigned to protect pedestrians and cyclists from motorists.
 - 51% agree they would cycle more if these changes were implemented.

Despite its popularity, polls show that [2/3rds of Brits](#) find our roads too dangerous to cycle on – a recent survey conducted by Censuswide for Swapfiets suggests that as many as [9 in 10 British women are scared of cycling in our towns and cities](#) – with fear of being struck by a vehicle, road rage and safety at night being the primary concerns.

It doesn't have to be this way. Cycling UK's [manifesto](#) outlines actions the next government can take to make cycling a safe, attractive and natural way of getting around. Read on to see how better transport choices can help your constituency to flourish.

This isn't just about transport. It's an investment in public health, people, place, the environment, and the future we want for our children.

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Q1) Why is cycling such a great investment?



Investing in active travel is fantastic value for money.

Cycling UK calls upon the next government to increase investment in cycling and walking to at least 10% of the total transport budget within five years to enable everyone to make happier, healthier, and greener choices.

Government estimates show that **cycling and walking schemes have an average BCR (Benefit-to-Cost Ratio) of 1:5.62**. Other international studies estimate that cycling infrastructure has an even higher return on investment – up to £13 per £1 spent.

Benefit-to-cost ratios. Return on investment. What does it all mean in practice?

- For every £1 spent on UK cycling and walking schemes, £5.62 worth of benefits are achieved – for the economy, our health, happiness, and the environment.
- A high value-for-money BCR is £2:1, so these ratios are officially rated as ‘very high’.
- Much higher, in fact, than the typical return on motorway upgrades and bypasses, which typically have a BCR of 3.1:1 and 3.7:1, respectively.

Cycling is one of the most cost-effective forms of transport spending. Yet in England outside London, **only 2% of total transport spending goes towards active travel (walking, wheeling, and cycling)**.

Further background

[Department for Transport – Claiming the health dividend](#)

Q2) How can cycling help us tackle the climate crisis?



The need for climate action couldn't be more urgent, and de-carbonising transport is a crucial step. There is no simple solution, but there is a single piece of technology which offers immense potential to reduce our emissions: the bicycle.

Transport is the UK's most polluting sector, accounting for around 26% of greenhouse gas emissions. Over 90% of this comes from road transport – cars, vans, and other motor vehicles - so we cannot tackle the climate crisis without reducing the amount we drive.

Cycling is the one of the most climate-friendly forms of transport:

- A 2020 [study](#) based on data gathered in seven European cities including London concluded that **people who cycle had 84% lower lifetime CO2 emissions from all daily travel.**
- Shifting from car to bike use 'drastically lowers' CO2 emissions – **a switch of just a single journey per day reduces a person's carbon footprint by approximately [0.5 tonnes over a year.](#)**

Meanwhile:

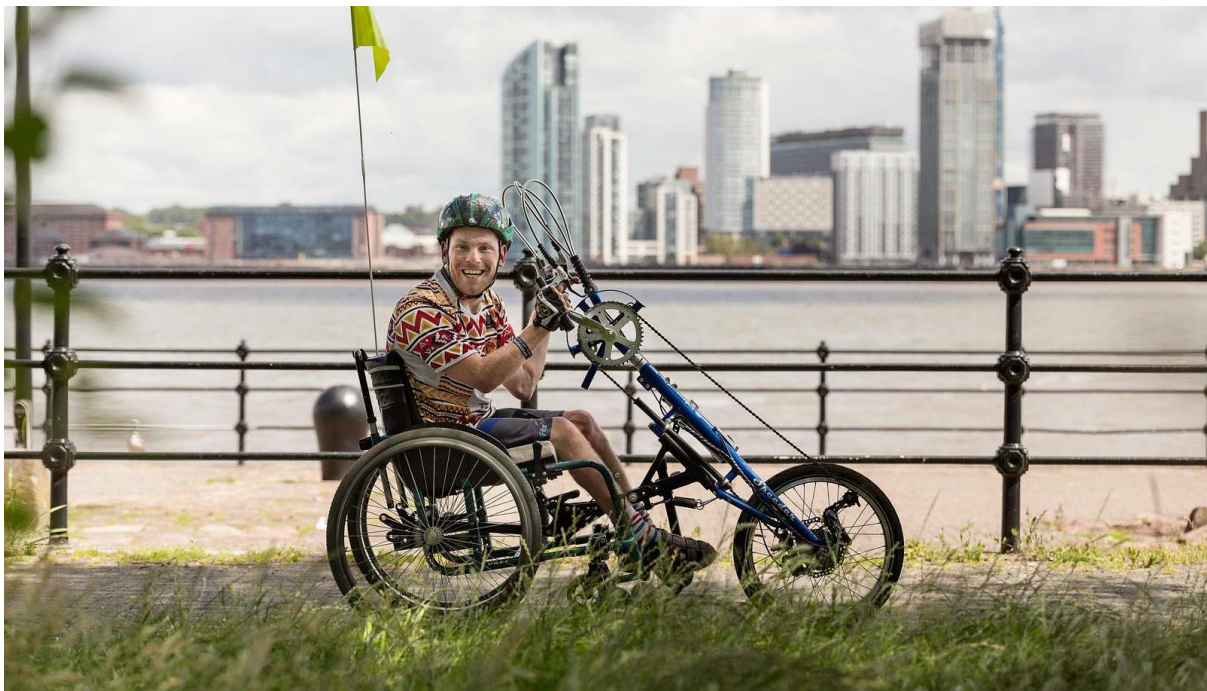
- Failure to invest in real alternatives means that **[52% of journeys under five miles are made by car.](#)**
- Half of people feel they have **[no alternative to owning a car,](#)** which often costs up to a fifth of annual income, exacerbating the cost-of-living crisis.

Providing alternative transport options allows people to choose how they travel and not be forced to rely on a car. **This won't just help the planet but will also ease the cost-of-living crisis for millions of people, enabling them to enjoy healthier, happier and greener lives.**

Further background

[Cycling UK – The case for cycling: tackling climate change](#)

Q3) What are the health benefits of cycling?



The health benefits of cycling are undeniable – it's one of the cheapest and most effective health interventions.

There is a huge bank of research that consistently shows that cycling is great for our health and well-being, reducing the risk of life-threatening conditions that are costly to treat and put enormous pressure on our national health services.

- Physical inactivity is associated with [1 in 6 deaths in the UK](#)
- Increased walking and cycling in England could save [1,189 people from early deaths each year](#).
- [Cycling to work](#) is linked with a 45% lower risk of developing cancer, and a 46% lower risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD), compared to commuting by car or public transport.
- Obesity-related ill-health costs the NHS around [£6.1bn per year](#) - cycling is consistently associated with [lower risk of type 2 diabetes](#) in adults
- Increasing levels of cycling to those seen in Denmark [would save the NHS £17 billion over 20 years](#) by improving people's health and wellbeing.

Rising levels of physical inactivity are contributing to national obesity and mental health crises, but by giving people healthy and sustainable transport choices, the next government could save our national health services billions.

Further background:

[Cycling UK - The case for cycling: health](#)

Q4) How can cycling help rejuvenate our high streets and town centres?



Enabling more people to get to and from their high street on foot or by bike has huge benefits for the local economy.

Between them, people who walk, wheel or cycle tend to make more trips to the high street and cyclists spend more in local shops than users of most other modes of transport.

This is why we **must maximise transport choice** so that people can decide for themselves what's the best way for them to nip to the shops:

More movement makes our high streets bloom

- Delivering projects that make our high streets and town centres more accessible for pedestrians and people who cycle **increases retail sales by 30% on average.**
- Vacancy rates are **five times higher** on streets with high levels of motor vehicle traffic.
- Beyond health and wellbeing, more walking and cycling friendly neighbourhoods **are worth up to 55% more in land value.**

Further background

[Cycling UK - Six reasons to build cycle lanes](#)

[Create Streets – Move Free report](#)

Q5) How will investing in cycling reduce traffic congestion in my neighbourhood?



Giving people the choice to replace some car journeys by walking, wheeling, or cycling is the solution to congestion.

Congestion is caused by too many motor vehicles, carrying only one or two people, taking up too much road space. Where good quality cycle lanes are built people use them, and those lanes move more people, more efficiently, in less space – freeing up our roads for everyone.

Congestion has been increasing across the UK every year – [costing road users around 115 hours and £894 a year](#) - due to the inefficient use of road space caused by too many cars carrying only one or two people.

- A three-metre-wide lane can only move 700 – 1,100 people per hour in cars, but if used by people cycling or walking, [that increases to 2,000 to 6,500](#) – **that's almost six times as many people.**
- On London's [Blackfriars Bridge](#), cycle lanes take up 20% of the road space but accommodate 70% of the people crossing the bridge at peak times.

- Two weeks after opening, [cycle superhighways](#) in London were moving 5% more people per hour than they could without cycle lanes.

Where good cycle lanes exist, people use them:

- In London, the total distance cycled increased by almost [5% in the year 2018/19](#); but tellingly, where new cycle lanes had been installed, increases of up to 53% were recorded.
- Glasgow – The [South City Way](#), a new 2.5km cycle route connecting the Southside and city centre, recorded over 935,000 trips between 2021 – 2023.
- Over a million cycling trips have been recorded along [Oxford Road, Manchester](#), since segregated cycle lanes were installed in 2022.

This pattern is repeated across the world:

- [Seville](#): built over 50 miles of cycle lanes in just a few years, leading to a 11-fold increase in the number of people cycling.
- [Bogota](#): the expansion of its cycle lane network by over 80km has caused cycling levels increase from 0.5% of daily trips in 1996 to 6% in 2018.

Further background

[Cycling UK - Cycle lanes move more people in less space](#)

[Cycling UK – Worse than Covid? How do cycle lanes really affect towns and cities?](#)

Q6) Who poses the greatest risk to pedestrians?



Irresponsible drivers put pedestrians most at risk.

Cycling UK is calling for a full review of all road traffic offences and penalties to ensure our roads are safer for everyone, especially the most vulnerable.

Whilst we all have responsibility for ourselves and others on the road, it is particularly important for drivers, [who bear the greatest responsibility](#), to take additional care of all vulnerable road users – children, the elderly, people with disabilities, pedestrians, horse riders and people who cycle:

- 95% of pedestrians treated for injuries in collisions are hit by motor vehicles - [only 5% are hit by cycles](#).
- Cycles are involved in less than 1% of pedestrian fatalities.
- In collisions involving one car and one cycle from 2012-2021 [almost 500 people who cycle died](#), compared to four car occupants.

Tougher regulations on cycling?

Tougher regulations for a relatively harmless activity such as cycling only serve to discourage people whilst failing to make our roads safer – a disaster for public health:

- There are around 30 million bikes in the UK, seven million of which are ridden by children - who could be criminalised by a system of regulated ownership.
- Banning people from cycling if they aren't registered or licensed is likely to put many off, especially those who would considering cycling or, like many, ride intermittently or seasonally.
- In countries famed for their high levels of cycling, such as the Netherlands and Denmark, there is no such system of tougher regulation.
- Where such regulations have been implemented, such as in [Toronto](#) and [Switzerland](#), this has quickly been abandoned due to nightmarish bureaucracy and failure to change offending behaviour.

'Careless' and 'dangerous' driving or cycling

Current legal definitions of ['careless' and 'dangerous' driving](#), as well as cycling, have led to confusion and inconsistency - lapses of concentration are regularly dismissed as 'accidents' or 'carelessness' rather than something that is avoidable, reflecting the attitude that an absence of care and resultant collisions are inevitable.

This leaves vulnerable road users lacking confidence that the justice system will robustly challenge irresponsible behaviour that puts them in danger and does nothing to make them feel that walking and cycling is safe.

This is why Cycling UK has advocated for a **full review of all road traffic offences and penalties** since long before it was promised by the Coalition Government in 2014. Better road traffic law, **not amendments that amount to sticking plasters**, will help ensure our roads are safer for everyone - especially the most vulnerable.

Further background

[Cycling UK - Road safety and cycling: overview](#)

[Cycling UK – 'Road Justice' campaign](#)

Q7) Do 20mph speed limits make our roads safer?



High speed traffic is the biggest barrier to being able to walk and cycle safely. 20mph speed limits are lifesaving.

A pedestrian hit by a car travelling at 30mph is eight times more likely to die than if the car was driving at 20mph - the likelihood of death drops drastically to 2.5% at 20mph.

Nearly 30 million people in the UK already live in Local Authorities with 20mph speed limits:

- In London, more than half of all roads are limited to 20mph, including all roads within the central Congestion Charge Zone.
- The Scottish Government has committed to making 20mph the norm across all its local councils by 2025.
 - According to the University of St Andrews, [popular backing for 20mph speed limits in Edinburgh continues to increase](#) since its implementation in 2017/18.
- 2020 Welsh Government Survey – 80% of adults in Wales would support a 20mph speed limit in their neighbourhoods.

Slower speeds are good for communities, the environment and our children's wellbeing. It is also the right move to make healthier alternatives, such as cycling, safer and more appealing.

Further background

[20's Plenty for Us \(20splenty.org\)](https://20splenty.org/)

[Cycling UK - 20mph: lower speeds, better streets](#)