

'Smarter Choices'

Information, encouragement and opportunities to cycle

THIS BRIEFING COVERS:

Information, awareness campaigns and incentives (advertising and promotional material; maps and online journey planners; Individualised Travel Marketing; tax incentives); opportunities to cycle (cycle training; school and workplace-based programmes; group or mass-participation bike rides; activities for specific groups); travel plans and funding.

HEADLINE MESSAGES

- Encouraging and incentivising people to try out alternatives to the private car are valuable and cost-effective complements to improving cycling conditions on the road.
- Often known as 'smarter choices', measures that are designed to do this include: elements of travel plans; advertising / promotional campaigns, cycle maps, marketing directly to individuals, tax incentives, cycle training, rides, plus events and activities for specific groups of people.

KEY FACTS

- Smarter choices are particularly cost-effective in terms of congestion, yielding on average £10 of benefits to every £1 spent.
- Smarter choice programmes in the Sustainable Travel Towns of Darlington, Peterborough and Worcester made a positive contribution towards economic growth, reducing carbon emissions, increasing health, promoting equality of opportunity, and improving quality of life.

Cycling UK VIEW

- Smarter choice measures are:
 - a proven way of reducing car use and carbon emissions;
 - an effective means of encouraging people to take up cycling, or to cycle more often;
 - a good investment, offering an excellent return.
- Investing in 'smarter choices' is at least as important as investing in physical improvements to the highway network.
- Both national and local authorities should dedicate sufficient resources to smarter choices, recognising that they rely on revenue rather than capital funding.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. The value and impact of smarter choices

Cycling UK view

- Smarter choice measures are:
 - a proven way of reducing car use and carbon emissions
 - an effective means of encouraging people to take up cycling, or to cycle more often
 - a good investment, offering an excellent return
- Investing in smarter choices (or 'soft' measures) is as important as investing in physical improvements to the highway network (or 'hard' measures).

a. Value

Over the last few years, studies have confirmed that 'smarter choices' are a cost-effective way of influencing attitudes to transport:

- A 2004 study found that they were particularly cost-effective in terms of congestion, yielding on average £10 of benefits to every £1 spent.¹
- According to a 2010 report for the DfT on the Sustainable Travel Towns (Darlington, Peterborough and Worcester), their smarter choice programmes: "... contributed positively to objectives of supporting economic growth, reducing carbon emissions, increasing health, promoting equality of opportunity, and improving quality of life." ²
- Research for the Scottish Government on mitigating transport's impact on climate change found that 'travel plans' (the term used in that report for 'smarter choices') were also amongst the most cost-effective ways to reduce transport's carbon emissions.³

b. Impact

Research into the effects of smarter choice programmes in all three of the Sustainable Travel Towns (2004 to 2009), found that:⁴

- Car driver trips by residents fell by 9% per person, and car driver distance by 5%~7% (compared with a fall of about 1% in medium-sized urban areas over the same period).
- Prior to the economic downturn, the volume of traffic observed on-street reduced by approximately 2% across the whole urban areas, with reductions of 7-8% observed in the inner areas.
- The number of cycle trips per head grew substantially by 26%~30%. Darlington (which was also a 'Cycling Demonstration Town') showed the greatest growth. Cycle trips declined in medium-sized towns elsewhere.
- The number of walking trips per head grew substantially, by 10%~13%, compared to a national decline in similar towns.

c. Smarter choices and cycling

As far as cycling is concerned, interest in the use of 'social marketing' techniques has been growing. This involves offering specific population groups an opportunity to try out cycling, backed up by incentives and information that is tailored to their needs and interests.

For people who lack confidence in their bike-handling ability, a chance to cycle under supervision in a local park or sports stadium is often an excellent starting point. For others who can cycle but are wary of other traffic, cycle training may help, along with supportive programmes at schools/workplaces. All of this can deliver substantial increases in cycle use at remarkably low cost.

2. Types of smarter choice

There are broadly two groups of smarter choices:

- **Information, motivation and awareness campaigns and incentives, e.g.:**
 - a. Advertising and promotional material
 - b. Maps and online journey planners
 - c. Individualised Travel Marketing (e.g. TravelSmart)
 - d. Incentive schemes
- **Opportunities to cycle, e.g.:**
 - a. Cycle training
 - b. Direct support for cycling
 - c. Workplace-based programmes
 - d. School-based programmes
 - e. Youth-based programmes
 - f. Bike Week and other cycling festivals
 - g. Group or mass-participation bike rides
 - h. Activities for specific groups (e.g. health referrals, older people, women, etc.)

Travel Plans: Smarter choice measures are an essential element of school and workplace 'travel plans', i.e. packages of measures to promote the use of sustainable and healthy travel modes. They focus mainly on behavioural initiatives such as those listed above, but can also include infrastructure provision, e.g. better access to sites, cycle parking, lockers and changing facilities.

3. Information, motivation and awareness campaigns and incentives

a. Advertising and promotional material

A key rule for delivering effective promotional campaigns – whether on billboards, leaflets or media advertising – is to show a positive image of cycling. It needs to be depicted as a desirable, relaxing and happy activity, open to people of all ages and backgrounds, wearing whatever clothes they would normally wear when out and about.

CASE STUDY: 'Catch up with the Bicycle' summer advertising campaign (TfL 2009).



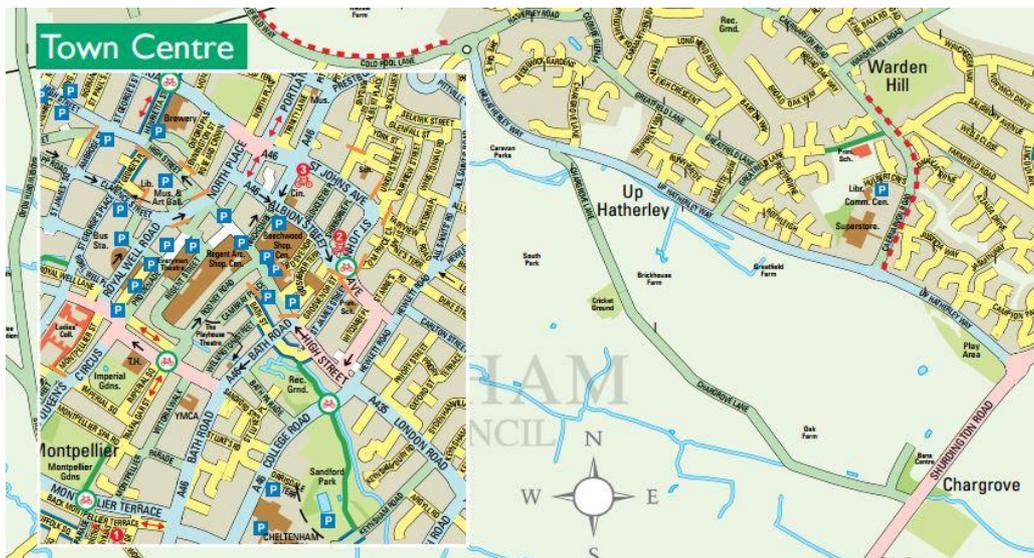
This positive and highly effective campaign deliberately chose to portray:

- attractive models (aspirational but not intimidating)
- a range of bicycles (folding, Pashley-style, fixed gear, town bike)
- normal, non-cycling-specific clothes, aspirational, but not too high fashion, and not obviously seasonal
- mix of settings (parks, roads, urban environment)
- a mix of photos with and without helmets

b. Cycle maps and online journey planners

Good print/downloadable cycle maps help encourage novice cyclists to explore routes away from main roads while they gain confidence. Maps, however, are of limited use if they only show a selection of routes. Instead, they need to cover a comprehensive network because the journeys that cyclists make are naturally diverse. Some local authorities and campaign groups map not only dedicated cycle facilities, but also grade the whole network to show what level of confidence a cyclist potentially needs to handle each road in the area.

The Cheltenham cycle map, compiled by volunteers from the Cheltenham Cycling Campaign, is an example of the route-grading approach. Similar maps have been produced in Northampton, Kettering, Warrington, Gloucester and Stroud.



Extract from the Cheltenham Cycle Map

- www.cyclecheltenham.org.uk/docs/cyclemap.pdf
- www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/en/councilservices/Transport/walking/Documents/PDF%20Documents/Northampton_CycleMap_Leaflet.pdf
- www.kettering.gov.uk/site/scripts/documents_info.php?documentID=720&pageNumber=1

A number of **online cycle journey planners** are now available or under development:

- Cycling UK's Journey Planner: www.cyclinguk.org/journey-planner
- CycleStreets: www.cyclestreets.net - an algorithm-based journey planner developed by CycleStreets, a not-for-profit social enterprise. Includes a user-generated photo library, and the ability to create dedicated URLs for specific towns (e.g. <http://cambridge.cyclestreets.net>). When the journey planner plots a route, it also includes photos of what the user will see along it, helping them find their way and giving an idea of what the street environment will be like for cycling.

c. Individualised Travel Marketing / Personalised Travel Planning

Individualised Travel Marketing (ITM), also known as Personalised Travel Planning, (PTP) offers tailor-made information to help individuals walk, cycle and use public transport more often.

Typically, ITM starts with gathering information by phone or on the doorstep. The individuals questioned are then segmented into: those who are already making significant use of sustainable transport; those who are not but would like to do so; and those who are not interested at all. For many people in the middle (largest) group, providing them with a bus timetable for the nearest stop or a local cycle route map may be enough to do the trick by highlighting possibilities they were unaware of or time savings they would not have expected. Others benefit from discussing their travel patterns more fully and appreciate advice on how to meet their needs more easily by sustainable travel.

The best-known ITM scheme, delivered as 'TravelSmart' for some years by Sustrans, has proved very cost-effective, typically achieving:

- an 11% reduction in car driver trips
- increases in walking, cycling and public transport trips of between 15% and 33%
- a benefit-to-cost ratio of 7.6 to 1

www.sustrans.org.uk/our-services/what-we-do/personalised-travel-planning

d. Incentives

Schemes to incentivise people to cycle operate in a variety of contexts, but are often targeted at work-related travel.

- **Cycle to Work Guarantee:** This is a Government scheme that invites employers to guarantee their cycle-friendliness through:
 - 'Storing': secure, safe and accessible parking
 - 'Changing': good quality changing and locker facilities
 - 'Buying': assistance with the cost of cycling equipment (i.e. through the Cycle to Work Scheme – see below)
 - 'Repairing': bike repair
 - 'Inspiring': training, reward and incentive programmes to achieve targets for more cycling.

So far hundreds of employers have signed up: www.cycletoworkguarantee.org.uk/

- **Tax:** HM Revenue & Customs allows a number of tax-deductible benefits to encourage cycling:
 - **Cycle to Work scheme:** this 'salary sacrifice' scheme allows employers to buy cycles and cycle safety equipment, lease them to their staff at a reduced rate, and offer them the chance to buy it when the loan period expires. Both parties are allowed to make savings against tax. The scheme is a very popular with employees, while some independent bike shops suggest that it accounts for a major proportion of their sales.⁵ In 2014, a record 183,423 employees participated, an 11.6% increase on 2013⁶: The Government continues to support Cycle to Work, despite proposing to restrict other salary sacrifice arrangements.⁷
www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycle-to-work-scheme-implementation-guidance
 - **Cycle mileage:** employers can pay their staff up to 20p a mile for cycling on business, tax-free. If the employer does not pay this or pays a lower rate, individual cyclists can claim the difference as a tax-deductible benefit (if they pay more, the excess is taxed):
www.gov.uk/expenses-and-benefits-business-travel-mileage/rules-for-tax

4. Opportunities to cycle

a. Cycle training

High quality cycle training (i.e. to the National Standard), often branded as 'Bikeability', helps teach both children and adults to cycle confidently and safely on the roads. www.bikeability.org.uk

- **Beyond the playground:** Unlike its predecessor 'Cycle Proficiency', the National Standard progresses through three levels. It starts by teaching basic control skills (typically learnt in the playground), then progresses until learners have the confidence and ability to handle busy traffic and major junctions. It is useful grounding not just for children, but also for teenagers as they become more independent and start making longer journeys. Adults who want to overcome worries or fears about cycling and/or need to revive their skills benefit from this training too.
- **Cost benefits:** An evaluation of the cost-effectiveness of different pro-cycling initiatives, estimated that cycle training may have a benefit-to-cost ratio of 7.4:1, the highest figure of all intervention types analysed.⁸

While cycle training is usually undertaken as a single activity in a formal setting like a school, there are other ways of encouraging both children and adults to take part. For example, school clubs (during or after hours) or multi-activity holiday events/courses can incorporate it into a cycling-related package (e.g. alongside bike maintenance and fun rides). Involving parents and families too is a good way of promoting cycling more widely, and a less structured approach might have a stronger appeal for secondary school pupils.

For more see: www.cyclinguk.org/campaigning/views-and-briefings/cycle-training
and Cycling UK's Cycle Training webpages: www.cyclinguk.org/courses-and-training

b. Direct Support for Cycling (DSC)

DSC is aimed at novice cyclists, including those who live in deprived areas. Training is a key element of this type of project, but it offers additional free or low-cost support designed to overcome obstacles that might stop someone from taking up every day cycling, including:

- Bike buddying (experienced cyclists accompany a novice as they travel around)
- 'Keep riding' assistance programmes
- Dr. Bike health checks
- Domestic parking
- Maintenance classes
- Estates projects
- Advice

The objective is not simply to get people to start cycling, but to help them to keep going.

The London Borough of Ealing has engaged successfully in the scheme for some years (see Ealing's report on cycling 2015 (section 8).

https://www.ealing.gov.uk/downloads/download/3776/cycling_in_ealing_report_2015-16

c. Workplace-based programmes

Workplace ‘cycle challenges’ aim to encourage non-cyclists or people who don’t cycle very much to think about giving cycling at least a go. The initiatives usually involve a competitive element, e.g. inviting workplaces in certain towns/cities, or departments within the same organisation, to sign up and see which of them can log the most miles/journeys/participants in a certain time (e.g. for three weeks).

Offering a short and positive cycling experience is a good first step towards changing people’s perceptions about cycling. Workplace cycle challenges may also encourage regular cyclists to ride more often, and leisure cyclists to branch out into cycle-commuting.

d. School-based programmes

For a number of years, the charity Sustrans has deployed expert (‘Bike It’) officers in thousands of schools across the UK. The officers provide resources, encouragement and a planned programme of activities, raising awareness among staff, students and parents alike (e.g. by leading discussions in assembly and in lessons such as geography or PHSE; organising events and activities, like ‘bike to school’ days and bike breakfasts; and promoting cycle training). They continue to support the school afterwards too. www.sustrans.org.uk/our-services/what-we-do/getting-young-people-active#schools

Sustrans also organises inter-school challenges, e.g. the ‘Big Pedal’, which in 2015 involved over 1,300 schools who between them clocked up over 1.4 million journeys by bike or scooter over just two weeks. www.sustrans.org.uk/our-services/who-we-work/teachers/big-pedal

e. Youth-based programmes

These programmes typically offer after-school ‘Bike Club’ activities for young people, e.g. on and off-road cycle training, cycle maintenance sessions, cycle festivals, competitions and challenges, tours, expeditions and BMX outings.

f. Bike Week and other cycling festivals/events

Perhaps the biggest annual events are Bike Week, delivered by Cycling UK in June and European Mobility Week (incorporating ‘In Town Without my Car’ day) in September. Both are excellent opportunities for councils, employers, schools and local cycling groups to come together to create opportunities for would-be cyclists to give cycling a try. www.bikeweek.org.uk
www.mobilityweek.eu/europeanmobilityweek

Big Bike Revival: for two weeks in summer 2015, Cycling UK teamed up with bike recycling centres all over England, offering people the chance to have their bikes repaired, learn about maintenance and rediscover cycling. The project, which the DfT agreed to fund again in 2016, encouraged over 21,000 people to cycle more often in 2015 (see infographic right). www.cyclinguk.org/project/big-bike-revival



g. Group or mass participation rides

Mass bike rides, such as Sky Rides, or Prudential RideLondon FreeCycle, allow individuals and families to cycle in a large crowd with a festival atmosphere. Often with a variety of stalls, ‘Dr Bike’ support and a route on closed roads, these rides attract thousands of participants.

h. Activities for specific groups in society / inclusive cycling

Cycling has much to offer many people, but especially those who need to increase their physical activity for the sake of their health, women, teenage girls, ethnic minorities, young people at risk, and people with disabilities. Tailored schemes can help overcome any specific cultural or practical barriers.

Many targeted projects involve try-out sessions or led rides, often in parks or sports stadiums, helping newcomers gain confidence in their ability to cycle. Some have adapted cycles for hire, and/or offer formal cycle training and basic instruction in cycle mechanics. A number of bike-recycling projects invite youths at risk or young offenders to learn maintenance skills and even build a bike to keep.

Amongst Cycling UK's community outreach projects are:

- **Community Cycle Clubs**, supporting any type of group/project set up to tackle issues associated with social, economic and health inequalities.
- **Play on Pedals**: a partnership with Cycling Scotland, The Bike Station Glasgow and Play Scotland, aiming to give every four-year old in Glasgow the chance to learn to ride a bike before they start school.
- **Belles on Bikes**, supporting women to get cycling in a friendly and relaxed environment. There are groups across Scotland

For more on Cycling UK's work in this field, see: www.cyclinguk.org/community-outreach

CASE STUDIES: opportunities to cycle

Cycling UK's development officers have been involved in a wide range of projects, including:



Boathouse Youth (BHY): operating in a deprived area of Blackpool, BHY offers Bikeability training, maintenance sessions, mountain biking at a local trail centre and visits to the local BMX track. Following a successful bid to Sport England, the project bought a fleet of bikes, plus associated equipment, and has been able to organise weekly rides and camping expeditions.



Burnley Active Spaces offers a weekly programme of health rides in Townley Park for people either responding to an advert or who have been referred by a health professional. Participants can make use of a fleet of mountain bikes and adapted cycles are available for those who are less mobile.



Merthyr Tydfil Bike Club is a 'transition' bike club project, designed to be a 'stepping stone' to fully-fledged bike clubs in High School. Involving five primary schools in the area, it covers route planning, bike maintenance, training, events and publicity exercises during the academic year.

For these, and other case studies, see: www.cyclinguk.org/case-studies

5. Travel plans: work, school, station and residential

Often written with input from the local and highway authorities, travel plans for workplaces, schools or developments aim to create an integrated approach to promoting alternatives to the private car.

Travel plans often include:

- reduction in car parking spaces; charging for car parking
- promotional activities and materials
- incentives
- new infrastructure, such as cycle parking, showers or routes

Local authorities may insist on a travel plan for a proposed new development to help minimise the adverse impact of the motor traffic it will generate. To do this effectively, they need to embed travel plan policies in their development frameworks and include suitable monitoring arrangements to ensure compliance, plus mechanisms to strengthen the plans themselves if they fail to achieve their objectives.

For guidance on travel plans, see:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20101124142120/http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/travelplans/tpp/>

CASE STUDY: Lancaster University Travel Plan

Lancaster University has worked hard to encourage and facilitate cycling since the introduction of its Travel Plan in 2004. A combination of 'carrot' and 'stick' measures has been crucial to its success. A restrictive student car parking policy was introduced in 2006, along with new secure bicycle parking facilities in its residences and a well-used, signed university cycle route into the city centre.

Overall, student car use dropped by 4.8% between February 2006 and November 2007, while cycling levels for those living off campus rose from 5% to 10%. 13% of staff cycle to work too.

- www.lancaster.ac.uk/sustainability/sustainability-practice/environmental-management/commuting-to-campus/travel-plan/
- http://ciltuk.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/The%20Hub/smarter/Promoting_Cycling_Through_Lancaster_De_Montfort_University.pdf

6. Funding

Cycling UK view: Both national and local authorities should dedicate sufficient resources to smarter choices, recognising that they rely on revenue rather than capital funding.

The split between capital and revenue funding can cause problems for smarter choice initiatives. Capital funding, which pays for 'hard' infrastructure schemes, tends to be more readily available from national government than revenue funding, which is needed to cover the running costs of a typical, ongoing 'soft' project. Local authorities therefore often struggle internally to gather enough money to set up and maintain smarter choice projects. A dedicated and easily accessible stream of revenue funding from national government for sustainable transport would help overcome this barrier.

Cycling UK's briefing on local transport and cycling discusses funding further:
www.cyclinguk.org/campaigning/views-and-briefings/cycling-and-local-transport

FURTHER READING

- Cycling UK's campaign briefings on
 - Cycling and local transport
 - Cycle-friendly schools
 - Cycling commuting & cycle-friendly employers

All at: www.cyclinguk.org/campaignsbriefings

- *Soft Measures – Hard Facts*: The value for money of transport measures which change travel behaviour. Review of the evidence. (NHS SW, Travelwise, Dept of Health et al). 2011. www.sthc.co.uk/Documents/DoH_Soft_Measures_Hard_Facts.pdf
- Collection of policy research and other documents on smarter choices: www.transportforqualityoflife.com/policyresearch/behaviourchange/

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ Cairns S, Sloman L, Newson C, Anable J, Kirkbride A & Goodwin P. *Smarter Choices – Changing the Way We Travel*. DfT. 2004. "... on average, every £1 spent on well-designed soft measures could bring about £10 of benefit in reduced congestion alone, more in the most congested conditions, and with further potential gains from environmental improvements and other effects, provided that the tendency of induced traffic to erode such benefits is controlled."

www.transportforqualityoflife.com/policyresearch/behaviourchange/

² Sloman L, Cairns S, Newson C, Anable J, Pridmore A, Goodwin P. *The Effects of Smarter Choice Programmes in the Sustainable Travel Towns: Summary Report*. DfT. Feb 2010.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-effects-of-smarter-choice-programmes-in-the-sustainable-travel-towns-full-report

³ Atkins/University of Aberdeen. *Mitigating Transport's Climate Change Impact in Scotland: Assessment of Policy Options*. Scottish Government Social Research. 2009. www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/282791/0085548.pdf

⁴ Sloman L, Cairns S, Newson C, Anable J, Pridmore A, Goodwin P. *The Effects of Smarter Choice Programmes in the Sustainable Travel Towns: Summary Report*. DfT. Feb 2010.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-effects-of-smarter-choice-programmes-in-the-sustainable-travel-towns-full-report

⁵ Cycle to Work Alliance. *Cycle to Work Scheme key for independent bike retailers*. Press release. 25/2/2016.

http://www.cycletoworkalliance.org.uk/news_54_3692578139.pdf

⁶ Cycle to Work Alliance press release February 2015. www.cycletoworkalliance.org.uk

⁷ HM Treasury. Budget 2016. March 2016.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508196/Budget_2016_print_ready_final.pdf

⁸ SQW. *Valuing the benefits of cycling: a report to Cycling England*. 2007.

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110407094607/http://www.dft.gov.uk/cyclingengland/site/wp-content/uploads/2008/08/valuing-the-benefits-of-cycling-full.pdf>