



SUMMARY REPORT:

The Route Forward

The people and places being transformed by cycling

cyclinguk.org


CyclingUK

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“We hope this will show decision-makers that transforming places and people’s lives through cycling is possible, and convince you it’s worth the effort.”

Foreword

What’s the one bit of evidence we’re missing to make the case for more cycling and walking schemes? That was the question posed a few years ago at a national conference. Sounding slightly frustrated, Active Travel England’s National Active Travel Commissioner Chris Boardman responded saying “We’re drowning in evidence. What we need are more stories”.

Stories matter, because people trust what they can see and feel, and Cycling UK’s new report is that visual story of the people and places across the UK being transformed by cycling.

Will people use it; do the public want it; will it work in a place like this; is it worth the political capital we’ll spend to do this? These are questions which can erode the confidence of councils and councillors considering new cycle routes and active travel schemes. The evidence tells us the answer to these questions is yes, but making the case for active travel isn’t just about data and evidence – we have to win hearts and minds.

Cycling UK’s ‘The Route Forward’ report shows what can be done, through the stories of what has been done. These case studies are from a range of



different schemes delivered across the UK, both high cost and low, and in rural and urban places. Of course, there are existing case studies from particular towns, cities or regions, but this is different. It's a story of successful and diverse schemes which should give confidence to local authorities that there's a scheme that can work for them, will be used, will get more people and particularly more women cycling, and which people will love.

We hope this will show decision-makers that transforming places and people's lives through cycling is possible, and convince you it's worth the effort. So, while we've included scheme details and the evidence about people cycling more where we have the data, the case studies are also stories of the people who've benefited from these schemes and the places that have been enriched.

There are many more places and examples we could have included in this report, but the ones we have showcase the success and popularity of well-delivered schemes. Making the case for cycling means showing people what's possible: your vision for the places that matter to them. There's a wealth of stories within this report to show this has worked. We just need to get better at telling those positive stories!

Steve Brooks

Director of External Affairs, Cycling UK

Executive summary

A growing number of high-quality cycle schemes throughout the four nations of the UK are boosting the numbers of people who cycle for everyday journeys. New routes and networks are transforming people's lives by meeting a hidden demand for safe spaces to cycle locally. These schemes also enhance and enrich the places they serve, making them more attractive and welcoming while benefiting whole communities, not only people who cycle.



This report draws on eleven case studies from across the UK's four nations and shows that where safe, protected and well-connected cycling infrastructure is provided, people respond by cycling more. But more than that, these exemplars of first-class routes for safe cycling also make places more attractive, improve people's lives and the local environment, and will be popular. The aim is for councils and politicians to see and be inspired by what is possible, and give them the belief and confidence that similar benefits can be achieved in their own areas and for their communities.

The central finding is clear: building safe infrastructure for cycling is the route forward. Across the case studies, high-quality cycle routes consistently generated substantial increases in cycling – between 50–72% in Glasgow, Cardiff, Manchester and Hackney.

While the case studies vary in location, scale and context – including examples in urban and rural areas – several common lessons emerge. The most successful schemes provide continuous, direct routes that enable complete journeys physically separated from traffic. This makes people feel safer and broadens the appeal of cycling to women, children, older people, disabled people and those who had previously lacked the confidence to cycle.

The best projects are underpinned by clear long-term visions, engage effectively with communities to ensure they reflect local needs, and allow design improvements throughout development and delivery.

The case studies show that initial opposition is often temporary, with support increasing once schemes are in place and their benefits become visible. Decision-makers should therefore have confidence to invest in ambitious projects that prioritise people, place and long-term public benefit.

The evidence challenges the viewpoint of those who say, 'no-one cycles here, so why build a cycle route?'. In practice, the opposite is true: cycling growth typically follows investment in high-quality routes and community projects which enable people to use them.

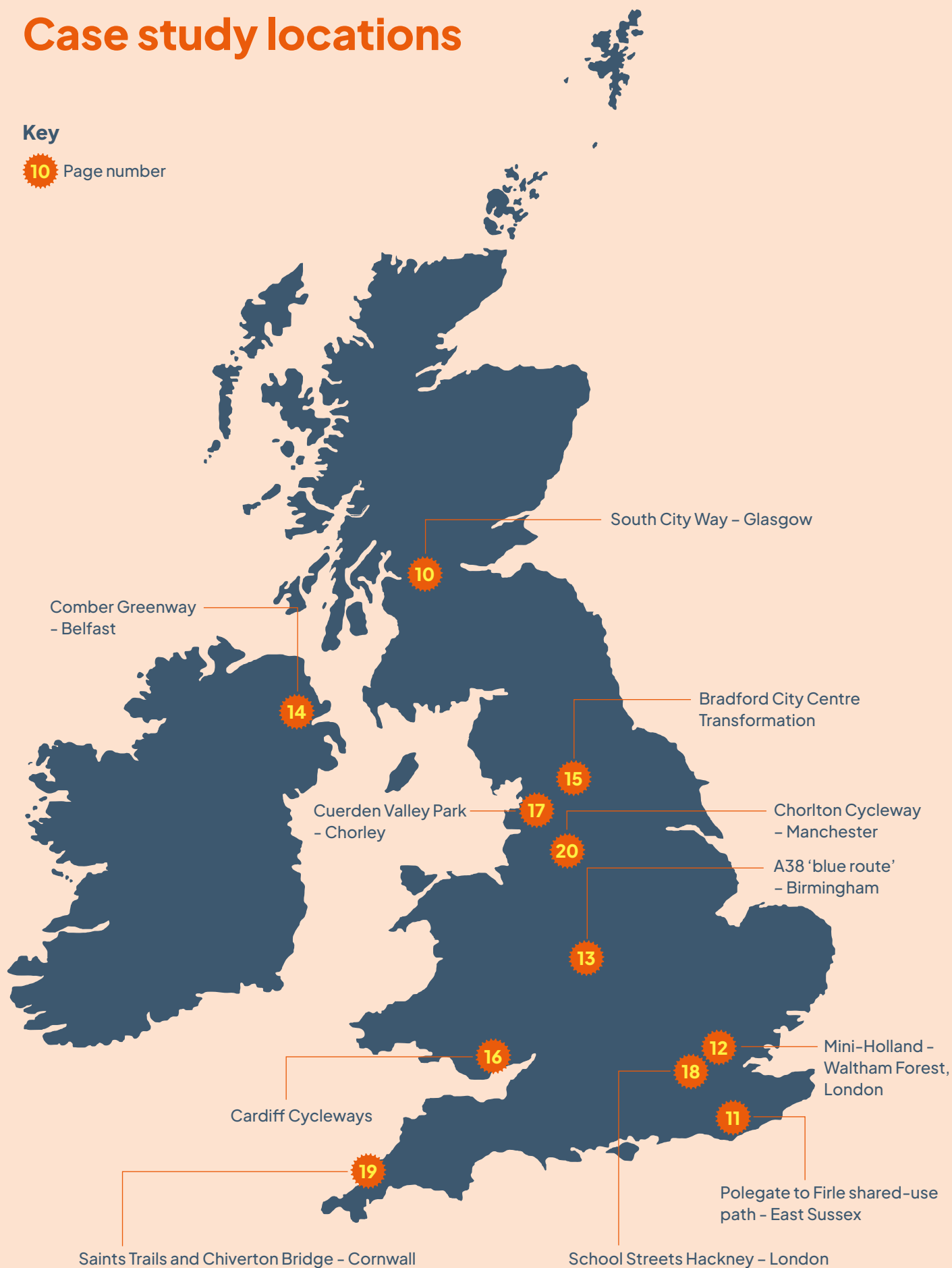
The UK now has numerous examples of successful cycle schemes which politicians and decision-makers can be inspired by and must learn from. The challenge now is to unlock cycling's full potential – accelerating delivery so that more people and communities can benefit.

Access the full report at:
cyclinguk.org/route-forward

Case study locations

Key

10 Page number





Introduction

The number of high-quality cycle routes is growing across the four nations of the UK, and they are increasing local cycle rates. These hotspots of first-class cycling infrastructure demonstrate that creating safe, protected space for cycling does significantly increase cycling levels. Combining this with projects which support people to cycle and use the new safe routes enables more people to make everyday journeys by bike and massively improves those places for the people who live, work there or travel through them.

There is overwhelming evidence proving the incredible benefits that cycling provides to individuals, communities and the environment¹. It improves people's physical and mental health, is good for family budgets, improves local air quality, supports local businesses, and much more. The financial worth of these benefits to society is high – for every pound that is invested in cycling schemes the payback in benefits to society amounts is worth £5.62².

This report shows how quality schemes transform places and people's lives. They encourage and enable active and healthy lifestyles, make places more attractive and communities love them. We hope the case studies and their common themes will inspire local decision-makers and convince them that building quality active travel schemes is an investment in people, communities and place that will quickly deliver huge benefits which are long-lasting.

A growing number of local authorities have demonstrated what can be achieved through sustained investment and commitment.

Creating cycling infrastructure is key

Despite the clear benefits and governmental commitments to increase the number of people cycling, cycling levels remain relatively low in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Evidence consistently shows that this is not because people don't want to cycle, but because many people are deterred by concerns about road safety³. Surveys repeatedly identify fear of traffic as the main barrier to cycling, particularly among women and less confident riders⁴. At the same time, a large majority of people say they would cycle more if safe cycling routes, which are separated from traffic, were available^{5,6}. This demonstrates a substantial hidden and unmet demand for cycling.

Research shows that the most effective way to increase cycling is through the provision of high-quality routes that physically separate cyclists from motor traffic or enable cycling on quiet streets⁷. Protected cycle routes are both safer⁸ and perceived as safer, making them attractive to a much wider range of people. By contrast, lower-quality measures such as painted cycle lanes have generally delivered limited increases in cycling⁹ and can offer little safety benefit¹⁰. While complementary measures such as cycle training and behaviour change programmes do play an important role, maximising their effectiveness depends on the availability of good infrastructure¹¹.

Demand for safe cycle routes is high

Although national cycling commitments are becoming more ambitious, delivery of cycle routes has often failed to keep pace. Funding has been inconsistent, and progress varies considerably between areas. Nevertheless, a growing number of local authorities have demonstrated what can be achieved through sustained investment and commitment. London, for example, has expanded its protected cycleway network substantially and seen cycling levels grow significantly as a result¹².

Local politicians and decision-makers are often faced with a dilemma: should investment wait until more people are cycling, or should safe cycling infrastructure be built first to encourage cycling growth? The evidence outlined above strongly supports the latter approach. Where high-quality routes are built, cycling numbers typically increase, suggesting that demand already exists but people don't cycle because they feel unsafe without these safe cycle routes.

£5.62

gained for every £1
spent on active
travel



There is also strong evidence that public support for cycling measures is often underestimated. A YouGov survey¹³ showed that more people support interventions, such as protected cycle lanes, lower speed limits and school streets, than they believe the wider community does. This has important implications for decision-makers who need to ensure that this mismatch between perceived and actual public opinion doesn't cloud their own judgement and become a barrier to delivering high-quality schemes.

Success breeds success

This report examines 11 successful infrastructure projects from across the UK's four nations which created space for cycling. Through a review of existing evidence and interviews with people who use the schemes, it explores how well-designed routes increase cycling levels, improve everyday travel experiences and deliver wider social benefits. By highlighting successful examples, the report aims to provide practical lessons and inspiration for decision-makers seeking to create safer, more attractive places and routes for people to cycle in their own communities.





56%

of residents surveyed now cycle more often

South City Way – Glasgow

Creating a high-quality cycle route along an arterial route has significantly boosted cycle use with peak time numbers of cyclists exceeding the number of drivers along some sections.

The South City Way in Glasgow is a 3 km uninterrupted cycle route, completed in July 2024, which connects Glasgow's south side with the city centre. The scheme introduced protected cycle lanes, redesigned junctions, widened pavements, improved crossings and lighting, enhanced signage, and traffic-calming measures to create a safer, more accessible corridor for everyday journeys. It now allows people to cycle for commuting, education, and everyday trips, with access to a variety of destinations along the way, including schools, hospitals, shops, and businesses.

“This summer we noticed seeing a lot more women that are not wearing cycling gear. They’re just wearing normal clothes, which is how it should be. In other European countries, it’s like that.”

Katherine, local resident

Key impacts

- **Increased active travel:** Overall walking, wheeling and cycling up 12%, with cycling volumes rising by up to 65% at peak commuting times¹⁴.
- **Rush hour benefits:** On sections such as Victoria Road cycling accounts for around 15–20% of all journeys, with peak-time volumes demonstrating that bikes now rival, and at times exceed, private car use¹⁵.
- **Modal shift:** 56% of surveyed residents reported cycling more often, and 23% walking more often following the improvements¹⁶.
- **Improved safety:** Perceived cycling safety increased from 26% to 54%, supported by reductions in speeding traffic and strong compliance at protected junctions¹⁷.
- **Environmental gains:** A 53% reduction in CO₂ emissions and a 75% reduction in nitrogen oxide pollutants¹⁸.
- **Economic uplift:** 36% increase in shoppers spending more than 30 minutes in local retail areas and improved perceptions of Victoria Road as a shopping destination¹⁹.
- **Community and family mobility:** More women and families cycling, improved confidence for children, and stronger local social interaction along the route.



Polegate to Firle shared-use path – East Sussex

Prioritising safety, accessibility and inclusivity has expanded the diversity of users well beyond the previously confident minority – enabling families, older people, less confident cyclists, mobility aid users and recreational walkers to use the rural path.

The Polegate–Firle shared-use path is a 13 km high-quality, traffic-free rural route alongside the A27 corridor in East Sussex. Completed in 2023, the scheme forms part of the National Highways A27 East of Lewes improvement programme. It provides a safe and continuous connection through countryside between Polegate and Firle, near to the South Downs National Park. By fully separating walkers, wheelers and cyclists from high-speed traffic, the scheme addresses longstanding safety concerns and creates an accessible route that supports everyday travel, leisure use and sustainable tourism.

“Possibly the best rural cycling and walking route in the country.”

Laura Laker, journalist²¹

Key impacts

- **Expanded participation and diversity:** The fully separated route has enabled a range of people to use the corridor, broadening participation beyond confident road cyclists²⁰.
- **Improved safety:** The continuous separation from traffic addresses historic safety concerns by providing a safe alternative to cycling on the high-speed A27 and making cycling a realistic option for many people.
- **Stronger connectivity:** The route links villages, bus stops, rights of way and employment areas, functioning as both a practical transport corridor and a recreational asset.
- **Environmentally sensitive rural design:** Careful alignment, habitat mitigation and landscape-led design protect the character of the South Downs.



Mini-Holland – Waltham Forest, London

Targeted investment in low-traffic streets and healthy places has increased the number of people cycling, transformed suburban travel behaviour and improved road safety, air quality, population health and life expectancy.

The Mini-Holland programme in Waltham Forest is one of the UK's most ambitious initiatives to transform suburban streets in favour of cycling and walking. Launched in 2014, the initiative was inspired by Dutch urban design principles, prioritising low-traffic residential streets, safe junction design, and clear priority for pedestrians and cyclists. The investments enabled whole journeys by bike.

The programme also represents one of the most rigorously evaluated active travel interventions in the UK, with robust short- and long-term evidence demonstrating its impact. While some interventions faced early controversy, the programme ultimately gained public support as the benefits became evident.

“A lot of the roads were previously used as rat runs during rush hour, and it was really busy. And now that’s all been changed and it’s so much nicer for the kids. Now we cycle every day, which is amazing.”

Sarah Lambert, local resident

Key impacts

- **Increased active travel:** Total active travel time increased by an average of 41 minutes per week. Residents in high-intervention areas are 24% more likely to cycle. Increases in cycling were sustained over five years²².
- **Inclusive participation:** Benefits seen across age groups, for women and for previously less active residents²³.
- **Traffic reduction:** Reduced car use within the area was not simply displaced elsewhere; there was an overall decrease in traffic²⁴.
- **Significant health benefits:** Approx. £1 billion in health-economic savings²⁵, plus an estimated 7–9 month gain in people’s life expectancy from the overall increase in physical activity²⁶.
- **Improved safety:** Safety and perceptions of safety improved²⁷.
- **Environmental improvements:** Reduced traffic, lower emissions, and improved air quality, reduces residents’ pollution exposure and increases life expectancy²⁸.



A38 ‘blue route’ – Birmingham

Creative use of existing road space, combined with continuous, fully separated cycle lanes, have made cycling safe, attractive, and visible, encouraging more everyday trips and fostering confident, inclusive participation across communities.

501

cyclists per day
use the route
(ave/yr)

In the south of Birmingham, the A38 Blue Route provides a continuous 4 km route between Selly Oak and Birmingham city centre, delivered as part of the Birmingham Cycle Revolution programme. The two-way cycleway runs alongside the A38 Bristol Road and includes a distinctive blue surface, dedicated cycle signals at junctions, and a unique section along the tree-lined central reservation of the dual carriageway.

The route links major destinations, including the University of Birmingham, Queen Elizabeth University Hospital, the Health Innovation Campus, and nearby residential areas, serving students, staff, and healthcare workers. Its design combines safety with visibility and is now a model for other schemes in the city.

“The blue route connects to so many places in the city centre, and to the university, hospital, shops.”

Khalda Begum, ride leader with
Share Calthorpe Community Cycle Club

Key impacts

- **Increased cycling uptake:** Automated counters report an average over one year of 501 cyclists per day, with year-round use even in less favourable weather²⁹.
- **Enabled cycling journeys:** The route enables safe, confident travel for women, new cyclists, and everyday users, supporting independent journeys along that corridor into the city.
- **Social connectivity:** The route links educational, healthcare, and residential areas, supporting commuting, leisure, and inclusive access, while fostering local pride and community-led initiatives around cycling.
- **Innovative use of road space:** The central reservation design demonstrates creative, high-quality urban planning, showing how cycle routes can be integrated along busy arterial roads without compromising safety or traffic flow.



Comber Greenway – Belfast

The introduction of lighting has transformed a multi-user path into a safe, year-round cycling corridor, boosting evening and winter use.

The Comber Greenway is an active travel route extending approximately 11 km from Dee Street in east Belfast to Comber. It is a predominantly traffic-free, shared-use corridor for walking, cycling, wheeling, and running. Opened in 2008, it follows the former Belfast and County Down Railway, which closed in 1950. The Greenway won a European Greenway Award in 2009 for route quality, environmental protection, and community connectivity.

Part of National Cycle Network Route 99, the Greenway functions as one of Belfast's main cycling corridors and a key link between neighbourhoods and the city centre. A major improvement in 2024 has been the introduction of red-spectrum, bat-friendly LED lighting along key urban sections (below right). This addresses declines in evening and winter use, extends functional hours, and improves safety.

“The red lighting along the Greenway has made it feel much safer to use in the autumn and winter evenings. It’s a nicer place for a walk than the noisy streets, and coming from an ecology background, I’m glad that the impact on wildlife was minimised.”

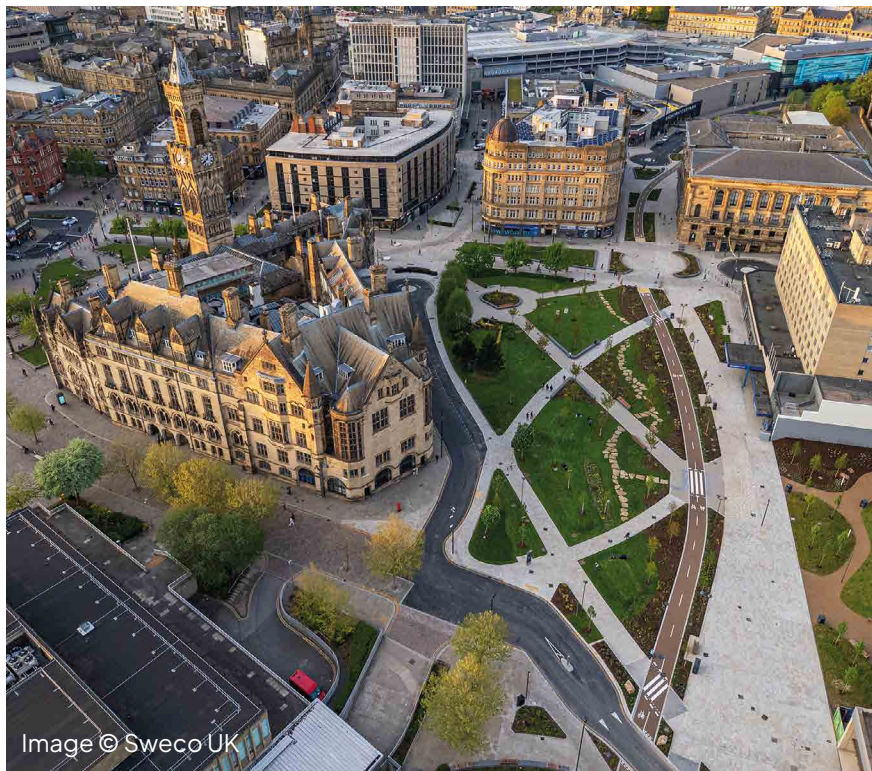
Traci Adams, local resident

Key impacts

- **Increased cycling levels:** Even before the installation of new lighting cycling numbers grew to become the dominant mode of travel along the route – from 26% of trips in 2003 to 54% by 2015³⁰.
- **Sustained growth in usage:** Overall journeys using the Greenway increased from around 45,000 in 2004 to 245,000 by 2012³¹.
- **Improved safety and confidence:** 81% of users supported the urban lighting project, reflecting high perceived safety and community backing. December trips were nearly 50% lower than June before the addition of the lighting, indicating potential for winter and evening user growth³².



Image © Signify



Bradford City Centre Transformation

Bold, people-focused urban design has made cycling and walking easier, enhanced public spaces, boosted economic activity, and delivered measurable environmental and social benefits.



The Bradford City Centre Transformation is a major urban regeneration and transport project that has reshaped the heart of Bradford to prioritise walking, cycling and public transport over private vehicles. The transformation was completed in 2025 and introduced approximately 2.4 km of cycle lanes, 1.6 km of pedestrianised streets, and 12,000 m² of new green space. It complemented Bradford's designation as UK City of Culture 2025, providing safe, attractive streets that enabled residents and visitors to travel sustainably to cultural venues and events. The award-winning project[†] has been widely recognised for its innovation, sustainability, and impact, establishing a national benchmark for people-focused urban design.

“The city centre is so much nicer now. All the relandscaping is really attractive, and the wildflower planting is lovely. You can now walk or cycle right through the city centre without worrying about traffic. So that’s a really big improvement.”

Norah McWilliam, local resident

Key impacts

- **Cycling connectivity:** 2.4 km of new cycle lanes, including separation from traffic and junction improvements, linked to the West Bradford Cycle Superhighway for a connected active-travel network.
- **Environmental impact:** 12,000 m² of green space, delivering a 24–27% increase in biodiversity, new trees and planting, and sustainable drainage systems³³.
- **Economic impact:** Footfall in the city centre increased by 25% in early 2025 compared to 2024, supporting local businesses and cultural tourism³⁴.
- **Community and social value:** Over £9.8 million of social value from volunteering, donations, and school engagement³⁵.

[†]Best Active Travel Infrastructure Project at the 2026 Landor Active County Conference <https://www.activecountycambridgeshire.uk/winning-entries>



Cardiff Cycleways

A process of testing and adaptation using temporary measures and incremental improvements has allowed ambitious network plans to move forward within an overall vision.

Cycleway 1 is the most complete of the six planned routes in Cardiff. Its two-way cycle path separated from traffic takes riders from the city centre to the University Hospital of Wales. The Cross City Route is the hub of the planned network and continues to be adapted and improved. The cycleways link residential communities with key destinations including hospitals, local schools and transport hubs.

The Cross City Route has demonstrated the demand for a cycle lane through the heart of the city which separates cyclists from traffic, however, its temporary nature has allowed rapid iterations to be made, such as modifications to junctions and lights. In its final form, part of the route will be placed on the opposite side of the road to allow for a safer and less interrupted journey.

“The Cross City Route is the best way to cycle from Adamsdown to Canton for socialising. Cycling it with my son from Newport Road into town feels safe and well-designed. The separation from traffic is especially vital at night, ensuring I stay highly visible and secure.”

Donna, local resident

Key impacts

- **Increased cycling levels:** Cycle flows increased by 50% to 72% on key sections of the routes³⁶.
- **Improved safety perceptions:** Satisfaction with cycling lanes in Cardiff increased by 8%; proportion of residents rating cycling as “safe” rose by 4% and “somewhat safe” by 8%³⁷.
- **Network connectivity:** The cycleways connect into wider active travel routes including the Taff Trail and key corridors to employment, education, and transport hubs such as Cardiff Central Station.
- **Usage under changing travel conditions:** Despite shifts in commuting patterns following COVID-19, the routes have maintained and grown usage, supporting both essential and leisure cycling trips across the city.



Cuerden Valley Park – Chorley

Path and cycling upgrades have transformed a country park into a fully accessible and inclusive space, supporting increased cycling activity and enabling people of all abilities to enjoy safe, year-round cycling.

Cuerden Valley Park, near Chorley in Lancashire, is a 650-acre green space with parkland and visitor facilities, owned by the Cuerden Valley Park Trust. National Cycle Network Route 55 runs through the park connecting it to regional destinations such as Preston and surrounding communities.

By 2023, sections of the trail network were no longer fit for purpose and barriers to accessibility were particularly affecting disabled people. This promoted a major path upgrade and cycling improvement programme to create a sustainable network for walking, wheeling and cycling.

“I was unable to access the Park with my recumbent trike but now I can sail through happily which is brilliant.”

Laura Pringle, local resident

Key impacts

- **Increased cycling:** Strava Metro data[†] indicates that cycling activity on a key route through the park increased following completion of the improvements, with monthly trips remaining above pre-improvement levels and peak usage increasing by over 50% compared with 2022³⁸.
- **Enhanced cycling infrastructure:** Upgraded multi-user paths with durable surfacing support high-volume use.
- **Stronger regional connectivity:** Improved links to National Cycle Network Route 55 and surrounding communities.
- **Greater accessibility and inclusivity:** Wider paths, gentler gradients, and redesigned entrances enable safe cycling for all ages and abilities, and accommodate a range of cycles including trikes, cargo bikes, and adapted cycles.
- **Environmental benefits:** Erosion control, habitat protection, and wildflower meadows enhance biodiversity.

[†]The analysis uses aggregated and de-identified data from Strava Metro



School Streets Hackney – London

Restricting traffic outside schools has reduced congestion, improved safety, increased active travel among pupils, and contributed to improved air quality.

The Hackney School Streets programme is widely regarded as one of the most successful initiatives in the UK aimed at reducing traffic around schools, improving air quality, and encouraging active travel. The scheme restricts motor vehicle access on roads outside schools during pick-up and drop-off times. Hackney was an early adopter of School Streets in the UK and has since developed one of the largest programmes nationally, now operating 50 School Streets across the borough, covering 48 primary schools and five secondary schools (83% of primary and 26% of secondary schools), and benefiting more than 20,000 pupils³⁹. Approximately 70% of Hackney residents supported making School Streets permanent⁴⁰.

“School streets has already had a huge impact at our school. The bike sheds are full as parents now feel safe and confident to let their children bike and scooter. Families that always used to drive are now walking every day. We are so pleased that Hackney made this happen so quickly!”

Abigail Hopper, Headteacher at Nightingale Primary School

Key impacts

- **Increased cycling:** Cycling trips to school increased by 51%⁴¹.
- **Increased active travel:** Walking and cycling across the borough increased from 61% to 69%⁴².
- **Traffic reduction:** Vehicle volumes outside schools fell by approximately 68% during morning and afternoon drop-off periods⁴³.
- **Reduced emissions:** Tailpipe emissions decreased by up to 74% at some sites⁴⁴.





Saints Trails and Chiverton Bridge – Cornwall

New traffic-free routes and a bridge installation have re-connected communities. Key to this was ending the severance caused by the busy A30 trunk road – enabling safe, sustainable and healthy journeys.

The Saints Trails project is a multi-route active travel initiative developed to enhance walking, cycling, and equestrian connectivity across mid-Cornwall. The scheme comprises two principal multi-user trails linking St Agnes to Threemilestone (towards Truro) and Perranporth to Goonhavern, covering approximately 13 km. A defining feature of the St Agnes to Threemilestone route is the Chiverton Bridge, a 48-metre traffic-free crossing over the A30 at Chiverton Cross, opened in April 2024.

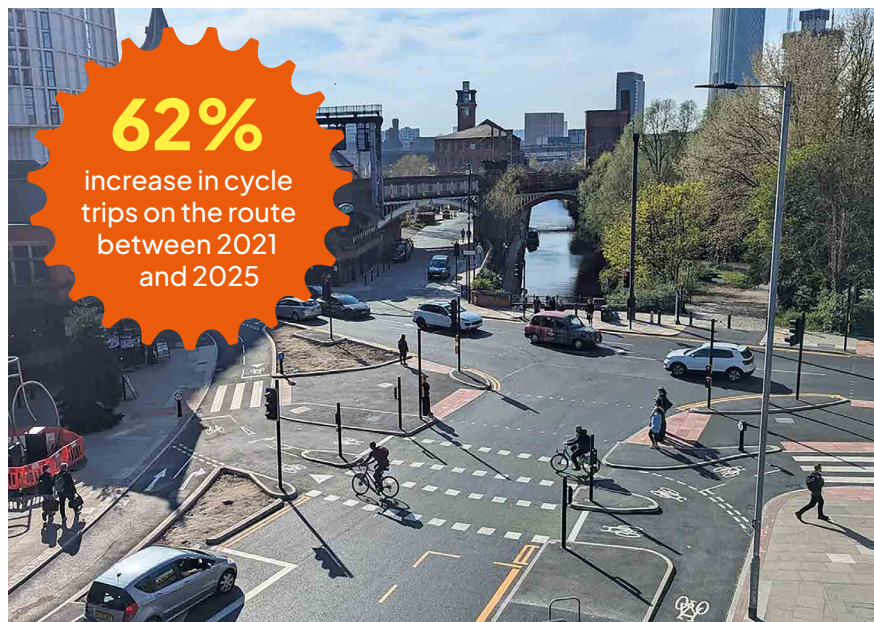
The project aimed to provide safer, traffic-free connections between communities, encouraging both recreational use and sustainable commuting while supporting Cornwall's wider transport and climate objectives. A central motivation for installing the Chiverton Bridge was to address the historic severance caused by the A30 trunk road, which has long acted as a barrier to non-motorised travel. Community advocacy, especially by the Truro Cycling Campaign, was instrumental in shaping the project and securing funding.

Key impacts

- **Active travel growth:** High uptake on the Saints Trails by walkers, cyclists, and equestrian users: 46% of users travel at least weekly⁴⁵.
- **Re-connected communities:** Continuous, traffic-free routes and an essential bridge across the A30 trunk road.
- **Improved safety:** Reduced risk on busy roads and when crossing the A30 at Chiverton Cross.
- **Health and wellbeing:** 64% of users report improved health outcomes⁴⁶.
- **Environmental benefits:** Chiverton Bridge achieved an excellent sustainability rating, 30% lower embodied CO₂, and 220% biodiversity net gain⁴⁷.

“The St Agnes to Truro Saints Trail represents a big step forward for inter-settlement cycling, enabling a range of ages to cycle... Count data from sensors on the bridge are already showing healthy levels of use.”

Sarah Wetherill, member of Truro Cycling Campaign.



Chorlton Cycleway – Manchester

A continuous cycle route, fully separated from motor traffic, which includes innovative CYCLOPS junctions, has sharply increased cycling uptake, and notably women and children feel able to travel safely and confidently.

The Chorlton Cycleway is a 6.5 km fully protected cycling corridor linking Chorlton to Deansgate in Manchester city centre and is the longest continuous separated route in Greater Manchester. Delivered between 2023 and 2025 as part of Greater Manchester's Bee Network the route combines continuous separation, bus stop bypasses, tightened side roads and traffic-calming measures. The award-winning scheme creates a seamless, high-quality corridor designed to support safe and inclusive everyday cycling. A defining feature of the route is its integration of multiple CYCLOPS (Cycle Optimised Protected Signals) junctions – an innovative design first piloted in Manchester – which physically separate cyclists from motor traffic and allow protected movements in all directions.

“It is so much better cycling in Manchester now. I cannot tell you what a transformation it is. We can cycle all the way into Deansgate with the kids... with the cycle lanes it means that you don't feel forced out by the cars, you feel like cycling is an option.”

Ella, local resident

Key impacts

- **Transformational growth in cycling:** Cycle trips on the route increased by 62% between 2021 and 2025⁴⁸.
- **Modal shift away from car use:** Residents report switching from car journeys to cycling, with some households reducing car ownership⁴⁹.
- **CYCLOPS junctions as a safety benchmark:** The protected signal design enables cyclists to navigate the junction without mixing with motor traffic, improving confidence.
- **Improved neighbourhood connectivity:** The uninterrupted corridor enables safe school runs, local shopping trips and access to the city centre, functioning as part of a wider joined-up network rather than a standalone commuter route.
- **Strong community engagement:** Weekly school bike trains, community rides and bike library schemes demonstrate how protected routes can be a catalyst for social initiatives.
- **Greater inclusion for women and families:** Increased confidence among women, children, and new or returning cyclists, addressing well-documented safety and confidence barriers.
- **Cultural shift towards everyday cycling:** The route is used by a wide range of residents, including families and previously inactive cyclists, helping normalise cycling as an accessible mode of daily transport.

Common lessons

The eleven case studies showcase a wide variety of projects and individually provide inspirational exemplars of what is possible. When viewed together themes emerge and valuable lessons can be learned to support the development of future projects.

1 Build it and they will come

Theme: Protected routes consistently unlock unmet demand for safe cycling.

Building high-quality cycling infrastructure consistently increases the number of people cycling. Cycle trips on the South City Way in Glasgow increased by up to 65% at peak times, and within a few years following full completion, cycles account for 15–20% of all journeys on the Victoria Road section.

Lesson: Do not wait for demand – instead create it through provision of high-quality safe cycling routes.

2 Aligning visions

Theme: Successful projects align with strategic plans and funding streams.

Many of the projects featured in the case studies are not isolated schemes but align with wider vision for the area. Bradford's city centre project connects with other cycle routes and fits with wider city transformation visions.

Lesson: Embed cycling infrastructure improvements in long-term transport strategies, climate and health policies, and funding programmes.

3 Multiplying the benefits

Theme: Cycling schemes deliver multi-sector benefits, not just transport.

The best projects bring more than just a new cycle route, which is important for people who don't cycle. Many case studies realised extra co-benefits for people, places, local economies and the environment after including these as objectives from the beginning. Hackney's school streets reduced and calmed traffic, and improved air quality by 74% – benefiting children's health.

Lesson: Frame projects as multi-benefit investments, not just transport schemes, e.g. public health, climate goals, economic regeneration. Ensure schemes align with what matters to communities, such as safety or local identity and place.

4 Enabling everyday journeys

Theme: Engagement that captures where people want to go and how people actually use spaces leads to better design outcomes.

Routes need to make sense for people's everyday journeys and take them where they want to go. This is particularly important for women who make more complex, multi-purpose journeys. The Cardiff routes featured in the study link people with the city centre, hospital, the university, schools and transport hubs.

Lesson: When planning, go beyond formal consultation to observe real behaviour, find out where people want to travel, gather qualitative feedback (stories & experiences) and understand barriers (e.g. fear, convenience & childcare).

5 Ensuring uninterrupted protection

Theme: The most successful interventions deliver joined-up routes enabling whole journeys, not disconnected segments.

The case studies included examples of long continuous routes in urban and rural areas and coherent local networks. Manchester's Chorlton Cycleway is a safe uninterrupted 6.5km corridor linking Chorlton to Deansgate in the city centre where people can ride freely, without having to mingle with traffic.

Lesson: Design routes as part of a strategic network, ensuring continuous routes, minimal gaps and connections to key destinations.

6 Physical separation from traffic

Theme: High-quality protected infrastructure, separating cyclists from motor traffic, is the biggest driver of uptake and safety.

Birmingham's A38 'blue route' 4km cycle track includes a unique section located along the wide central reservation. The design also cleverly separates people cycling from pedestrians.

Lesson: Provide high levels of protection from traffic using separated lanes on busy roads, closed roads and traffic-free routes where possible. Combine dedicated infrastructure for cycling with traffic management measures such as modal filters, restricted access streets and reallocation of road space.

7 Improving junctions

Theme: Junctions are often the weakest link, but where improved, they unlock use.

Junctions can be the most dangerous places so improving safety must be a priority for any project. Manchester's Chorlton Cycleway features multiple CYCLOPS (Cycle Optimised Protected Signals) junctions which physically separate cyclists from motor traffic and are common in some European countries.

Lesson: Invest in high-quality junction design as a priority part of any scheme, not as an afterthought. Eliminate turning conflicts, provide protected signals and simplify movements.

8 Feeling safe is crucial

Theme: Both objective safety and feeling safe are essential to increase cycling levels.

The case studies show that when people feel safe, they will cycle and cycle more. Glasgow's South City Way increased perceptions of safety from 26% to 54%. High levels of support were shown in Belfast for lighting to improve the Comber Greenway.

Lesson: Design for all users, not just confident cyclists. Incorporate safe junctions (e.g. CYCLOPS), lighting and visibility, safe cycle parking, low speeds and reduced conflict points.

9 Inclusivity matters

Theme: Good infrastructure broadens the appeal of cycling.

New routes should be designed for all, not just those who cycle now. Chorley's Cuerden Valley Park network of routes was rejuvenated with wider paths, better surfaces and better accessibility for disabled users. Many case studies heard from women who are now cycling more, and families with their children.

Lesson: Design with inclusivity in mind, e.g. accessible gradients and surfaces, wide paths, intuitive layouts and family-friendly conditions.



10 Ongoing engagement

Theme: Involving a wide variety of stakeholders from the outset and throughout delivery is worth the effort.

Genuine consultation, listening and feedback pays dividends. Extensive and early collaborative engagement with parish councils, residents, landowners, and environmental organisations during the Polegate to Fittleton project in East Sussex informed the design and ensured the route responded to community priorities.

Lesson: Consultation should be a continuous process, not a one-off, and involve early-stage co-design, engagement during construction, and post-implementation feedback. View community groups as partners, not just consultees to improve identification of barriers, co-design, promotion and usage.

11 Support evolves over time

Theme: Initial opposition is common, but support grows after implementation.

The Mini-Holland project in London's Waltham Forest faced initial controversy and significant opposition but has later gained strong support. In Hackney, 70% of people wanted the School Streets to be made permanent after initial trials.

Lesson: Anticipate initial resistance as normal, not a failure. Pair consultation with clear messaging on what is changing and why, and communication of the benefits. Provide regular feedback and updates and allow time for public opinion to evolve.

12 Allowing an iterative approach

Theme: Change can be disruptive, but projects can be phased to help people see results and ongoing engagement can allow schemes to evolve for the better.

Several featured projects opened in phases and used feedback to refine and improve routes. Cardiff's Cross City Route began as 'pop-up' lanes introduced during the Covid pandemic. The route is being made permanent and improved incrementally in response to user feedback.

Lesson: Adopt a 'trial first, decide later' delivery approach using measures which can be adapted, using results to inform final decisions. An adaptive approach, within boundaries, allows consultation to be genuinely responsive and shows decision-makers are listening.



Recommendations

We recommend that all local authorities learn from the case study exemplars and create new safe cycling infrastructure.

Design

1. **Build safe high-quality routes** – Create high-quality safe separated infrastructure which protects people from traffic and is built according to national guidelines and standards.
2. **Ensure continuous safety** – Build cycle routes which are continuous and unbroken providing protection for extended distances, including at junctions, rather than cycle lanes which come to a sudden halt or stop and start.
3. **Connect people with destinations** – Ensure routes take people where they want to go and link to places people want to be – providing a joined-up network of safe routes.
4. **Include everyone** – Ensure infrastructure is designed to be accessible to all and inviting to everyone – especially those who don't yet cycle.
5. **Broaden the benefits** – Aim to improve or regenerate the areas through which cycle routes pass as part of the project. Use the opportunity to improve pavements and public spaces for the long-term – for people and the environment.

Consultation and communication

6. **Establish a strong vision** – Embed cycling schemes within the objectives of wider strategies and ensure there is a clear purpose for the project. Proactively communicate this and the wider benefits of the scheme with stakeholders, communities and residents.
7. **Engage meaningfully** – Engage with communities at the earliest opportunity to understand their needs. Use their feedback to improve designs and get community buy-in. Speak to as many groups and types of stakeholders as possible.
8. **Maintain resolve** – Be steadfast in the project vision and purpose, acting for the good of the majority. Don't cave in to loud but minority negative opinions in the early stages and avoid treating consultation as a referendum. Recognise that change can be difficult but that in time projects will attract more support and acceptance.
9. **Sustain communication** – Communicate positively with communities about the project's vision and keep speaking to people throughout the implementation process.

Deliver and monitor

- 10. Phase delivery** – Take a sectional or phased approach to completing routes. Allow users to feel the benefits of sections before the whole is complete whilst continuing to communicate with communities about progress and the vision for the whole route.
- 11. Experiment** – Work with communities to improve designs and see what works best. Test measures on the ground, hold genuine pilot schemes and listen to feedback before they are made permanent.
- 12. Monitor impact** – Collect data before and after (short and long-term) to show impact. Install cycle counters for long-term monitoring. Monitor nearby streets to show wider impact. Aim to monitor and assess modal shift, not just cycle numbers. Monitor public perceptions of safety too.

Enable and encourage

- 13. Support participation** – Fund projects, especially for communities near the new cycling routes, to enable people to use the new safe space. For example, cycle training, buddy schemes, and women's cycle groups.
- 14. Increase access to bikes** – Set up public bike share schemes, bike libraries, and/or support projects which refurbish bikes and provide them to those most in need of a pedal cycle. These schemes enable people to access a bike and use the cycle routes. Another option is to support projects which provide e-bike loans so that participants can try before they buy.

Conclusions

The case studies show strong evidence that high-quality cycling infrastructure increases cycling levels, with people readily using well-designed routes that are safe, direct, continuous and connected to destinations. Testimonies from women show they particularly benefit from these schemes, and from projects which enable them to use the new routes. Successful schemes deliver wider benefits beyond cycling, including improvements for communities, local economies and the environment.

Past approaches based on minimal or poor-quality provision have generally failed to attract significant numbers of cyclists. More recent successful projects combine high design standards with a clear vision for improving transport, while also engaging constructively with local communities and enabling people to confidently use the new routes.

Those involved in making choices about investment in cycling schemes should be inspired by the success of these projects. We need to judge the impact of these schemes on local monitoring data rather than national

cycling statistics, which can mask the impact of individual projects. Local evidence and personal stories from communities provide a clearer picture of the benefits of new routes.

The case studies demonstrate that the UK now has numerous examples of successful cycling projects, meaning decision-makers no longer need to look exclusively to places such as Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Paris or to central London for inspiration. Growing expertise and the learning from exemplar projects within England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland provide a strong foundation for wider implementation.

To achieve transformational change, we need to overcome barriers to delivery and learn from successful schemes. Improving places for cycling isn't just a great investment – it makes them more liveable, welcoming and attractive. Decision-makers should have confidence that delivering new cycling routes in their areas can generate similar benefits for their communities and that once people see the benefits for themselves, they don't want to go back.





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