The Route Forward

The people and places being transformed by cycling

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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 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, with case studies 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 benefitted 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 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.

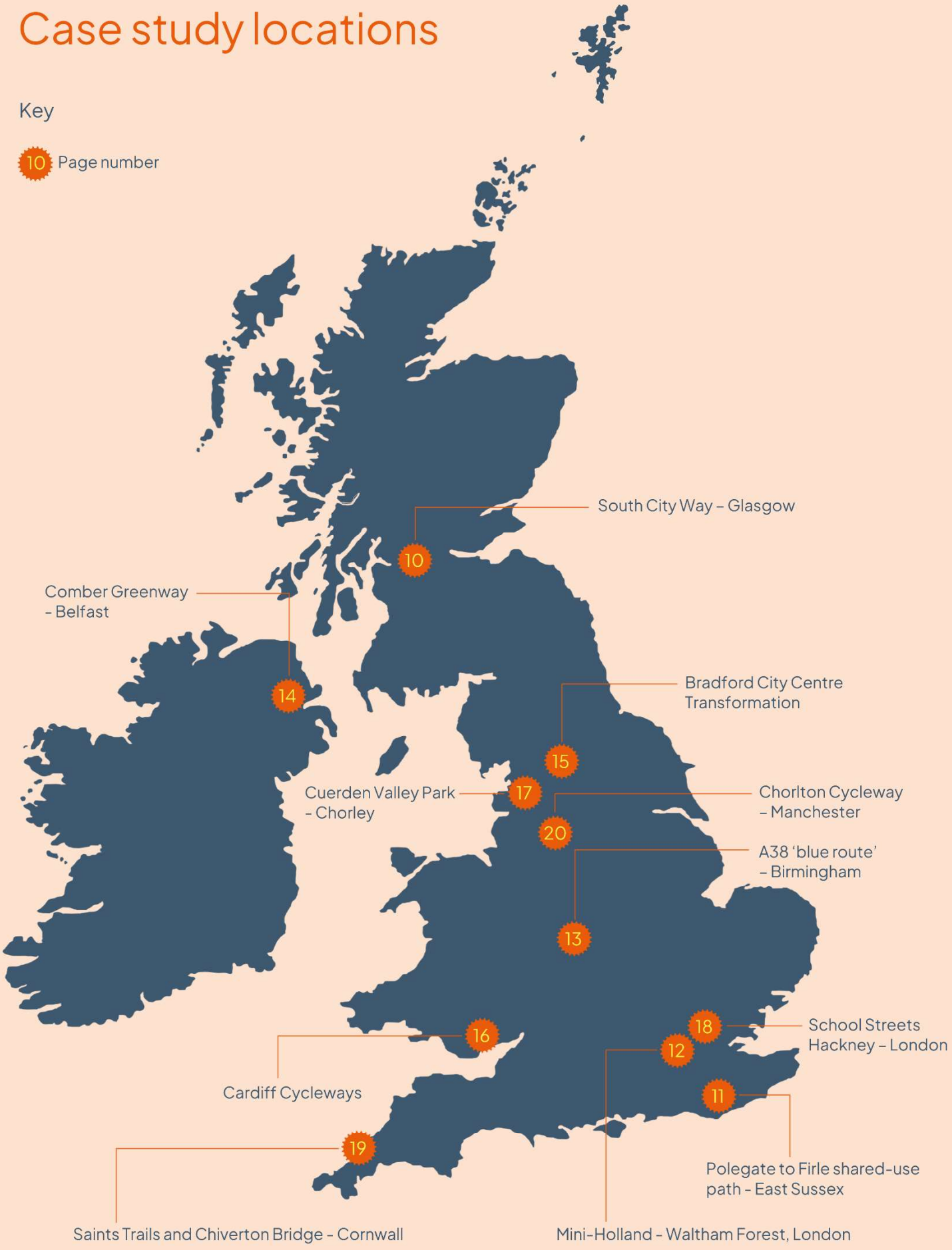
The best projects are underpinned by clear long-term visions, engage effectively with communities to ensure they reflect local needs, and allow design improvements throughout development and delivery.

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.

Case study locations



Introduction

The number of high-quality cycle routes is growing throughout the UK and where they have been built, they are boosting the levels of cycling. These hotspots of first-class cycling infrastructure provide safe space for cycling, separating riders from motor vehicles and enabling more people to enjoy cycling for short everyday journeys.

Many more projects to create high-quality safe cycling infrastructure are needed if the UK is to become a cycling nation and if we are to reap the significant benefits for individuals and society (Cycling UK, 2026. IPPR, 2024).

Useful lessons can be learnt from places where cycling schemes have been delivered in recent years and are showing positive results for cycling numbers and other objectives.

Seeing is believing

This report shows that building high-quality safe cycling infrastructure is a good investment. The evidence comes from case studies of successful schemes throughout the UK.

The aim of this report is to show local decision-makers that building high-quality cycle routes increases cycling numbers. It draws out common lessons that can be learned from the case studies and provides recommendations to make implementation of future projects successful - smooth, popular and achieve maximum benefit.

Government commitments to boost cycling

Levels of cycling in the UK are low compared to cycling's peak popularity in the 1950s (House of Commons Library, 2013). From this point on car ownership and use rose and cycling mileage decreased. In the later part of the 20th century cycling levels plateaued at a much lower level although this century has seen a slightly more positive outlook with steady but slow increases in the number of people cycling (Cycling UK, 2025. Golbluff & Aldred, 2012). In 2025, 1.4% of journeys in GB were cycled (Cycling UK, 2025).

Governments in all four nations of the UK have commitments to increase rates of cycling, although ambition and funding levels vary. Governments recognise the many benefits of more people cycling, for the individuals themselves, for society and for the environment.

In its Third Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS3) for England the Department for Transport (2026) laid out a vision for 'walking, wheeling and cycling to be safe, easy and accessible choices for everyone' and set a target for 55% of all short stages in towns and cities to be walked or cycled by 2035.

The Scottish Government's long-term vision is for 'walking and cycling [to be] the most popular choice for everyday short journeys' (Transport Scotland, 2023).

The Active Travel Act in Wales requires government and councils to increase levels of cycling, and the Welsh Government (2021) has set a target of 45% of journeys to be made by public transport, walking and cycling by 2040.

Northern Ireland's Department for Infrastructure (2024) has consulted on a new Active Travel Delivery Plan with a vision to 'create a seamless, integrated network that allows more people….to choose active travel'. The 2022 Climate Act also requires the government to allocate spend 10% of the transport budget towards active travel - walking, wheeling and cycling (Northern Ireland Assembly, 2022).

Sufficient funding from national governments is key to making these commitments a reality but IPPR (2024) warns that, in the past, inconsistent funding from national governments has sent the wrong signals to local government about the effectiveness or value of investing in cycling infrastructure. Instead, they recommend governments produce long-term investment plans and commit to spending £50 per head on active travel to create the world-class cycling infrastructure needed.

Despite the insufficient and inconsistent funding landscapes a number of local authorities across the nations are making the most of limited funds and proactively seeking to boost cycling in their areas. Several councils, including

some covered in this report, are forging ahead with cycle friendly policies and providing significant investment in cycling infrastructure, for example in London, Glasgow, Manchester, Leicester and Cambridge (ATE, 2025).

London has had the most success at a local level with Transport for London (TfL) and the boroughs growing London's protected Cycleway network from 90 km in 2016 to over 430 km by 2025 (TfL, 2025). Cycling in the capital has almost tripled since 2000 with 1.5 million daily journeys made by bike in 2025 (TfL, 2024).

Cycling is good for people and for society

Cycling is undoubtedly a positive activity, not just for individual health, wellbeing, finances, carbon footprint and freedom, but also for wider society. 68% of people surveyed by Cycling Scotland (2023) agreed that Scotland would be a better place if more people cycled.

Creating cycling infrastructure makes it possible for people to cycle and helps to realise these many benefits (Cycling UK, 2026). Cycling projects, such as creating cycle routes have excellent economic returns – deemed 'very high' by the Treasury and much better than most road transport schemes. Davis (2014) shows that every £1 spent on cycling and walking schemes delivers on average £5.62 of wider benefits, including health, congestion, environmental and local economic benefits.

Despite government commitments and the strong evidence of societal gains if more people cycled, the potential for those benefits are not being realised because so many people are deterred from cycling. High level commitments are not being matched by sufficient funding and concerted action to remove the barriers to more people cycling for everyday journeys.

Latent demand

Surveys consistently back up the fact that many people want to cycle or cycle more. There is significant latent or supressed demand for cycling in the UK but safe space to cycle is the biggest factor deterring people.

Fear of traffic and people's perception of the risk of serious injury is consistently stated in surveys as the dominant reason why people don't cycle (Pooley, 2011). A 2024 survey reported by City AM (2024) found that 90% of people are scared of cycling in urban areas. An annual attitudes survey by DfT (2024) showed that safety concerns are the main reason that people are put off cycling - 61% of all respondents want safer roads. For those who already cycle this motivation was more pronounced – 69% of men and 78% of women who cycle at least once a year agreed with this. In a 2025 YouGov survey for Cycling UK (2025b) over half of women (58%) believed their cycle journeys are limited by safety concerns and a lack of suitable infrastructure.

Respondents to the DfT (2024) survey agreed that more off-road and segregated cycle paths (52%) would motivate them to cycle. These results are mirrored in Scotland where 79% said that more cycle lanes, traffic free routes & cycle paths would be a motivation to cycling more, whilst 71% wanted less / slower traffic on the roads (Cycling Scotland, 2023).

This data shows that a significant proportion of people want to cycle in their communities but are put off primarily due to lack of safety. Politicians can mistake low cycling levels for a lack of interest in cycling rather than as latent demand. It means the safe cycling infrastructure needed to meet the demand does not get built. People want safety, freedom from being stuck in traffic or squashed on public transport at busy times, financial savings, fitness and wellbeing.

Creating infrastructure is key

The creation of high-quality cycling-specific infrastructure which is safe to use and protects riders from traffic is what drives the uptake of cycling (Teschke et al, 2012). A study by Anupriya et al (2025) examined London's Cycle Superhighways using DfT data and found that these protected or segregated routes increase cycling without raising collision risk, while non-segregated routes raise collision rates without boosting cycling volumes.

Cycle infrastructure, physically separated from traffic is safer than no dedicated infrastructure - reducing the risk of injury by 40-65% (Adams & Aldred, 2020). Protected routes or those located on quiet streets are safer for people cycling

and, importantly, feel safer. When cycle infrastructure projects are designed according to national standards, are of a high-quality, and take people where they want to go, rates of cycling are very likely to increase. In the past, councils have often opted for lower quality cycling interventions such as painted cycle lanes which have not resulted in a significant change in cycling numbers (Pucher et al, 2009). In addition, advisory cycle lanes – denoted by a dashed white line - were found to increase the risk of injury by 34%, compared to no cycle lanes (Adams & Aldred, 2020). It is, therefore, imperative that high-quality protected cycling infrastructure projects are installed if cycling rates are to increase.

The first generation of Cycle Superhighways in London, opened in 2010–11, focused on low-cost on-carriageway solutions - painted blue lanes with no physical segregation. TfL's approach changed after 2012 toward physical separation of cyclists from traffic. The contrast in outcomes between the two generations is well documented — with large cycling increases occurring on the later segregated routes rather than the earlier painted ones (Interreg, 2018).

Infrastructure projects to create safe space for cycling are most effective when combined with behaviour change interventions, e.g. community-based projects which provide cycle training or access to bikes (Pucher et al, 2010; Snaije, 2021). These interventions are important to enable those who are least likely to cycle, such as women and older people, however, their effectiveness is limited where infrastructure is poor (Yang et al, 2010).

Greater delivery needed

Modern cycle routes are not being created at the pace needed to fulfil latent demand, meet national targets for boosting the number of people regularly cycling, or to support wider objectives set by government, such as for air quality, carbon reduction, and population health.

Despite government commitments to increase cycling levels, investment across the nations of the UK has been patchy. As a result, national data has shown only marginal improvement in cycle rates over recent decades. To observe the impact of cycling schemes a hyper-local level view must be taken - if sufficient monitoring is put in place. The success of investment in London in increasing cycling numbers has already been described. Survey data from the capital also highlighted that in 2018, half of respondents (49%) saw a lack of separate cycle lanes as a barrier to cycling – whereas in 2025 that had been halved (26%) (Cycling UK, 2025b).

Local delivery of cycling infrastructure is currently not matching national ambition in each nation. Whilst this is in part due to limited funding, the funds that are available need to be used well by local authorities. Creating more hotspots

of high-quality infrastructure and increasing their size is essential for maintaining momentum, demonstrating impact and increasing the benefits.

Build it and they will come

Across England, Scotland and Wales decisions to approve the creation of cycling infrastructure are made by local or regional politicians. In Northern Ireland the Department for Infrastructure makes these funding choices. **Wherever the location, politicians need confidence that creating cycling infrastructure will be a good investment and be used by people when it is created.**

In addressing the challenge of how to increase cycling numbers but ensure effective use of limited funding and resources, local politicians are faced with a classic 'chicken and egg' dilemma – whether to wait for cycling numbers to rise before building new cycle routes or create the safe cycling space first which will attract people to use it.

What we have seen above is that the evidence points to existing latent public demand for cycling due to the lack of safe infrastructure. As such, the 'build it and they will come' approach is the strategy local politicians should take for increasing cycling numbers, combined with supporting community-based projects which enable people to confidently use the new routes.

Clearly this policy takes strong political will, confidence and commitment to spend taxpayers' money on schemes which are aimed at future user levels rather than today's low levels.

Mismatched perceptions

Politicians also face a challenge of judging the public mood and making decisions which will be accepted, including spending public money in appropriate ways. However, society is often more supportive of councils creating cycling infrastructure than politicians believe they are, and this creates a barrier to projects going ahead.

A study by Walker and te Brommelstroet (2025) explored this disconnect in perceptions and found that people significantly underestimated public support for sustainable transport options relative to their own. Bike for Good (2020) found a tendency for people to overestimate other people's dislike of cycling, and similarly a Cycling UK (2020) survey discovered that people tended to over-estimate others' opposition to active travel schemes by as much as 50%.

YouGov polling, commissioned by Cycling UK (2026b) showed the level of support for measures to increase cycling was higher than what the same people believed would be the level of support shown by their neighbours. Almost a half

(49%) of people supported increasing the number of protected cycle lanes where they live but thought only a third (32%) of other people where they live would support this measure. The same disconnect can be seen for opinions on reducing speed limits where they live (50% vs 38% respectively) and introducing 'school streets' which would limit motor traffic outside of schools at arrival and departure times to enable more children to walk or cycle to school (70% vs 49% respectively).

This phenomenon can distort decision-making, as decision-makers, like most other people, can publicly conform to perceived majority views while privately holding different beliefs. In addition, Walker and te Brommelstroet (2025) also suggest that policy-makers may find achieving support for change difficult because people wanting change may not express this in public. People tend to 'hide' their true opinions because they incorrectly assume their view represents an unpopular minority view.

Be inspired by success

Over recent decades cycling infrastructure design and construction has developed and improved, with new ideas tested by innovators in the UK and other nations. From this governments have produced guidance for local authorities – LTN/120 (DfT, 2020) and the Rural Design Guide (ATE, 2026) for England, Cycling by Design in Scotland (Transport Scotland, 2026), Wales's Active Travel Act guidance (Welsh Government, 2021) and the London Cycling Design Standards (TfL, 2014). Numerous cycle routes dotted throughout the UK conform to these standards and show what is possible elsewhere. Momentum for cycling is increasing in locations around the UK - where early-adopter towns and cities have installed the type of high-quality cycling infrastructure which are attracting people to cycle.

Bandura (1977) showed that people learn behaviours - and crucially, whether to attempt behaviours at all - by observing others successfully doing them. The absence of a visible model suppresses behaviour adoption. His term 'vicarious motivation' captures the idea that seeing someone else succeed is what triggers your own attempt. **Those making decisions to invest in cycling infrastructure can now see examples where others have succeeded, see what is possible and learn from them.**

Methodology

The report provides case studies of cycling infrastructure schemes at 11 locations and the impact of each. The case studies are exemplars of modern 21st century adaptations to local environments which decision-makers can immediately learn from and be inspired by.

The case studies which follow are in-depth examples of successful high-quality cycling infrastructure schemes from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. While the majority are in urban settings, rural cycle routes are included, and there are also a variety of infrastructure features, including cycle routes, path networks, bridges and junctions.

The research for this report employed a qualitative approach, combining a review of existing evidence with primary data collected through interviews. The evidence review examined a range of sources, including academic publications, government and local authority policy documents, research reports, and local news articles. These sources were reviewed to identify existing evidence on the impact of the cycling infrastructure in each of the 11 locations.

Primary research consisted of semi-structured interviews with individuals that use the infrastructure. These interviews explored individual perceptions, experiences, and the ways in which the infrastructure had changed their travel behaviour, health, and daily lives. The interviews provide first-hand insights that complement the findings from the literature.

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.

Executive summary

The South City Way in Glasgow is a £6.5 million investment spanning 3km of uninterrupted cycle lanes, completed in July 2024, and connecting Glasgow's south side with the city centre, from Queen's Park to Trongate. The route was developed by Glasgow City Council with significant funding from the Places for Everyone programme, backed by Transport Scotland and administered by Sustrans (now Walk Wheel Cycle Trust). 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. The route provides a continuous corridor for commuting, education, and everyday trips, with access to a variety of destinations along the way, including schools, hospitals, shops, and businesses.

The South City Way has delivered measurable positive outcomes since its implementation:

- **More people cycling than driving at rush hour:** 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 use along the corridor.
- **Increased active travel:** Overall walking, wheeling and cycling up 12%, with cycling volumes rising by up to 65% at peak commuting times.
- **Modal shift:** 56% of surveyed residents reported cycling more often, and 23% walking more often following the improvements.
- **Improved safety:** Perceived cycling safety increased from 26% to 54%, supported by reductions in speeding traffic and strong compliance at protected junctions.
- **Environmental gains:** A 53% reduction in corridor CO_2 emissions (estimated 618 tonnes annually) and a 75% reduction in NOx.
- **Health and wellbeing benefits:** Increased physical activity, reduced stress, and improved journey experience for regular users.
- **Economic uplift:** 36% increase in shoppers spending more than 30 minutes in local retail areas and improved perceptions of Victoria Road as a shopping destination.
- **Community and family mobility:** More women and families cycling, improved confidence for children cycling, and stronger local social interaction along the route.

Background and development

Cycling in Glasgow

The South City Way forms part of Glasgow City Council's broader commitment to sustainable transport, aiming to reduce reliance on private vehicles, improve road safety, and promote health through active travel. Glasgow's Strategic Plan for Cycling 2016-2025 set out a vision to *'create a vibrant Cycling City where cycling is accessible, safe and attractive to all'* with aims to increase cycling participation; improve infrastructure through expanding cycle lanes, improving junction safety and providing better cycle parking; and enhance safety through better design and education.

This plan has since been superseded by the Active Travel Strategy (2022–2031), which takes a broader approach to walking, wheeling, and cycling, aiming to make active travel the natural choice for everyday journeys including through a 270km 'City Network' of walking, wheeling and cycling routes across Glasgow. Other developments in the local area include Glasgow's Low Emission Zone in the city centre, introduced in 2023, and events such as the 2023 UCI Cycling World Championships which was accompanied by a range of cycling-focused community events in the city.

Further infrastructure development across the city has included the Govan-Partick Bridge, a major new pedestrian and cycle bridge over the River Clyde, funded with £12.685 million each from the Scottish and UK governments. The bridge recorded more than 820,000 crossings by pedestrians, and over 185,000 cyclist crossings between September 2024 and May 2025 (Glasgow City Council, 2025).

Development of the South City Way

Almost £3.7 million in funding for the South City Way was awarded through Places for Everyone, an active travel infrastructure fund backed by Transport Scotland and administered by Sustrans, now known as Walk Wheel Cycle Trust. The balance of the project cost was supplied by Glasgow City Council, bringing the total to around £6.5 million.

Planning for the development involved consultation with communities, businesses, and transport stakeholders. The involvement of Sustrans plus local organisations indicates that this was very much a collaboratively driven project. The development of the route began with design and preparatory work in spring 2017, with construction starting in December 2017. Construction occurred in phases (halted temporarily by the COVID-19 pandemic) with ongoing monitoring and stakeholder engagement informing design adjustments. Sections of the route opened between 2023 and 2024, and the project was officially completed in July 2024. An extension to Battlefield was completed in early 2025.

Key infrastructure improvements included:

- **Separated cycle lanes:** Continuous lanes physically separating cyclists from motor traffic.
- **Protected junctions:** Redesigned intersections with traffic-calming measures and signal prioritisation for cyclists and pedestrians.
- **Improved signage:** Consistent directional information along the corridor.
- **Enhanced connectivity:** Links to existing local and regional cycle networks, connecting residential areas, schools, and commercial hubs.
- **Pedestrian improvements:** Widened footways, upgraded crossings, and better lighting.

- **Traffic management measures:** Modal filters, lane reductions, and lower speed limits.

The South City Way Small Grants Fund, set up by Sustrans and Glasgow City Council, supported local community groups in delivering small-scale projects along the route designed to make the area more attractive and community friendly. Funded improvements included murals, planters, and bike-locking facilities to complement the cycling infrastructure.

Key outcomes

Research by Sustrans (2024a) has demonstrated the huge impact of cycling infrastructure investment overall across Scotland on active travel. The research (across a number of Places for Everyone funded routes and infrastructure developments) showed an annual 29% increase in route users after construction, and for routes open 2–5 years this increase was as much as 62%. In addition, a majority (89%) of route users felt safe in using the new routes, and there was a significant reduction in casualty rates in locations where Places for Everyone projects had been delivered.

The impact specific to the development of the South City Way is widely evidenced by a number of sources. The following outlines the key effects:

Modal shift and cycling uptake

Investment in the South City Way has delivered substantial and measurable increases in active travel. Detailed follow-up monitoring by Sustrans and Glasgow City Council, drawing on video and manual counts, commuter and postal surveys, retail surveys, and community focus groups, provides a robust before and after comparison, using a 2017 baseline and 2023 follow-up (Sustrans, 2024b). The postal survey data found that respondents had positive perceptions of the development, with 65% of respondents agreeing that the changes had improved the walking and cycling infrastructure. Respondents described the positive impact that the infrastructure had on their own active travel along the route. Changes to the route had encouraged 56% of respondents to cycle more often, and 23% to walk more often.

Annual Usage Estimates show that total walking, wheeling and cycling along the route increased by 12% after completion (Sustrans, 2024b). Cycling volumes rose especially sharply, with a 65% increase in cyclists using the route at key commuting times. The highest usage was at the southern end of the route, where Victoria Road and Allison Street had the highest cycling and pedestrian usage overall. This was attributed to the location of Queens Park Station on Victoria Road and the retail businesses on this part of the route. There was also

found to be an increase in the use of cycle parking, and particularly the numbers of cycles parked at Queens Park Station regularly exceeded capacity.

In addition, traffic surveys collected by Cycling Scotland (2025) found that cycle journeys on the route grew between September 2023 and September 2024 by 46% (an increase of around 1,718 trips). On Victoria Road, a 48-hour count recorded 5,457 bicycles, with cycling accounting for approximately 15–20% of all journeys—one of the highest modal shares recorded on any urban Scottish street. Cycling Scotland compared this data to that recorded on Saracen Street, a similar street in the North of Glasgow, in which just 1.5% of people cycled their journey. The Cycling Scotland study also showed that there was a wider impact of the South City Way on an increase in cycling on nearby streets – those which do not have cycle lanes but connect to the South City Way. Nearby Nithsdale Road showed a 45% annual growth in cycling, and Allison Street showed a 22% annual growth.

More recent traffic surveys on Victoria Road show that 16.1% of people cycled their journey on South City Way, a new record modal share for the route, with more bikes than cars recorded at all rush-hour peaks over the two-day period (24–25 September 2025), demonstrating the continuing impact of protected infrastructure on everyday travel choices (Cycling Scotland, 2026).

Safety and traffic benefits

The South City Way was designed to be accessible and to protect vulnerable or less confident cyclists with separated cycle lanes. The evidence shows that the infrastructure is delivering both tangible and perceived safety improvements. Users of the route indicate that they would not have cycled their journeys had the South City Way not been there. One local woman explained, ***"I wouldn't have started cycling without it …I'm not confident in cycling on roads like that."*** Another echoed this sentiment, saying, ***"I very rarely cycle on the roads… and if the path wasn't there, I wouldn't cycle to work and I wouldn't cycle to the pool either."*** These accounts highlight how the route is not only improving perceptions of safety but also actively enabling new and previously reluctant cyclists to travel more regularly by bike.

There is a broader feeling among parents and carers that the separated route provides a safer environment for children to cycle.

> ***"You're much more likely to cycle when you've got your own lane … I'm just thinking back to my mum when I used to cycle around and how worried she would be. But now, when my son is older, I can imagine him cycling … With*** **[the South City Way]** ***there, it just 100% feels much safer."***

(Male cyclist, uses the South City Way with his children)

Interviews and focus groups conducted by Sustrans as part of the South City Way evaluation (Sustrans, 2024b) indicated that users felt that there had been improvements in safety following the construction of the route. Participants reported that the provision of protected space for cyclists and pedestrians enhanced their sense of safety, making the active travel experience more comfortable for many. These positive safety perceptions were also supported by the postal survey. Overall, 41% of respondents agreed that the changes to the route had improved feelings of safety. Those who felt safe cycling on the South City Way increased from 26% to 54%. When compared with Glasgow overall, the recent Walking and Cycling Index report (2023) found that only 39% of residents feel cycling is safe in their local area, suggesting that South City Way users experience a higher level of perceived safety due to the new infrastructure.

Monitoring of usage and perceptions of the infrastructure was conducted throughout the development of the South City Way. The route incorporates several 'protected junctions' – road junctions that separate people travelling on foot, by cycle, and in vehicles, designed to enable pedestrians and cyclists to safely cross busy roads. Between March 2019 and September 2021, a trial of two protected junctions on Victoria Road was conducted by Sustrans (2021). The study found that the total cycle traffic through the junctions had almost doubled during the time period. Video footage showed that 94% of cyclists followed the cycleway through the protected junctions as intended. Interviews were also conducted with route users to find out how the introduction of the junctions had changed safety perceptions. All of the cyclists reported feeling either safe or very safe, and over two thirds of pedestrians felt either safe or very safe.

Sustrans' report on the impact of Places for Everyone funded infrastructure across Scotland (2024a) found that the majority of route users agreed that the route they were using felt safe. The research found that, for Places for Everyone funded projects, casualty rates dropped from a range of 0.1–0.35 casualties/km before construction, to 0–0.05 casualties/km three years after construction. While these figures are aggregated across all projects and not specific to the South City Way, they indicate the potential safety benefits of high-quality active travel infrastructure like the South City Way. Objective safety-related metrics also indicate improved conditions for cyclists and pedestrians around the South City Way, with traffic speed data showing a significant drop in the percentage of vehicles travelling over the speed limit – from 52% in 2017, down to 33% in 2023 on Pollokshaws Road, and from 39% down to 18% on Gorbals Street (Sustrans, 2024a).

"After pedalling the South City Way my verdict is it is better for both cyclists and motorists. If everyone uses them properly these lanes have the ability to make cycling in Glasgow safer and quicker. If it encourages more people to cycle, it will take more cars off the road and reduce congestion for those who do want to travel by car."

(Paterson, 2024)

Environmental and health impacts

The evidence indicates that, as a result of a reduction in car travel, levels of noise and air pollution have reduced, making neighbourhoods healthier and more pleasant to move around for local people (Sustrans, 2024a; 2024b). Sustrans collected data on traffic volume, percentage of heavy-duty vehicles and average speeds before and after the construction of four Places for Everyone projects across Scotland. The data found that the estimated carbon emission rates from vehicles had reduced by 7% on average. Out of the four projects measured, South City Way saw the largest reduction in CO2 levels, falling by 53%. Assuming this value was consistent for the entire length of the route, this was estimated to be a carbon saving of 618 tonnes per year. This coincided with a 75% decrease in NOx (nitrogen oxides). These outcomes point to broader health and environmental gains from the infrastructure – considering that poor air quality is the largest environmental risk to public health in the UK (Sustrans, 2024b).

The impact of cycling on positive health and wellbeing outcomes from an increase in physical activity is well documented. The Sustrans research shows that Places for Everyone funded projects have significantly boosted health outcomes by increasing physical activity amongst people and communities. Across the projects, 94% of people who responded agreed that a desire 'to get exercise' influenced their choice to walk, wheel or cycle along one of the routes (Sustrans, 2024a). Further research on active commuting in Scotland (Baker et al., 2021) shows that walking and cycling for transport can generate substantial health-economic benefits, with annual savings estimated at around £671 million due to increased physical activity and reduced risk of disease. Whilst these calculations are made at population level, the evidence of increased walking and cycling on the South City Way indicates that similar positive health and wellbeing outcomes are likely occurring locally, suggesting the route is contributing to higher physical activity levels, improved public health, and associated economic benefits for the surrounding community.

Cyclists' accounts illustrate how users of the South City Way are already experiencing the kinds of physical and mental health benefits reflected in the wider evidence base. One female cyclist who uses the route to cycle to work

commented ***"I just feel better about myself, I feel healthier. And I can get to work so much quicker. So that just makes it so much easier and less stressful."***

Economic impact

The South City Way route provides key connections to local retail areas, and the data suggests that local businesses will have benefited from this. Surveys delivered to local retail business owners and to shoppers along Victoria Road by Sustrans (2024b) found that the infrastructure had enabled more shoppers to arrive using active travel. Most shoppers travelled up to 5 miles to access the retail area on Victoria Road. In terms of length of time spent in the shopping area, there was a significant shift towards shoppers spending longer in the area. There was a 36% increase in the number of shoppers spending more than 30 minutes in the area. In addition, people perceived the area more positively and as a result felt more reasons to go there – when asked about the retail area overall, there was a 12% rise (68% up to 80%) in shoppers who thought it to be a good retail area.

Local cyclists commented that they had noticed an increase in cafes and shops in the area, along with an increase in people travelling to the area to visit these.

> ***"I think there will be economic impacts. Cafe culture is a thing – people like bakeries. And I don't know that the cycle path has anything to do with an increase in people coming into the area, but it probably does. I think it probably makes it more active travel friendly."***
>
> (Female cyclist, cycles to work and for leisure)

Social and community development

Sustrans found that the South City Way is busiest during key commuting times, and the access it provides to the city centre as well as schools and hospitals suggests it serves as a direct route to work or education for many people. In addition, the Sustrans survey also found increasing recreational use of the South City Way – the proportion of people using the route for recreation rose from 43% at baseline to 61% at follow up. This indicates that the route is used for multiple purposes, providing access to a variety of locations and effectively connecting communities and places of work.

> ***"The South City Way is changing people's lives in Glasgow every day. By providing a direct and accessible route to and from the city centre, the South City Way is connecting people with schools, hospitals, and other employment opportunities.'"***
>
> (Karen McGregor, Scotland Director for Walk Wheel Cycle Trust, reported in Sustrans, 2024c)

Sustrans also found that residents living near the route reported an increase in agreement that there is space along the route to socialise, rising from 22% to 37% in the postal survey. This effect was even more pronounced in the commuter survey (distributed online to people using the route for commuting), with agreement increasing by 48 percentage points from 19% to 67%. Focus group participants also provided positive feedback, highlighting benefits for community cohesion and social interaction along the route.

Improving family cycling experiences

Katherine is an active cyclist with two young children and works professionally as Families Coordinator for Glasgow cycling organisation Women on Wheels. Her insights therefore reflect both lived experience and practitioner expertise. Katherine describes the South City Way as having a significant positive impact on her household's mobility.

> ***"The South City Way has transformed some journeys that I can do with my kids."***

The route has enabled regular cycling journeys – such as trips to parks, shops, classes, and the city centre – that the family might otherwise have accessed by car or public transport, or perhaps not done at all. She emphasises that the protected, continuous nature of the route has allowed her children to experience safe, low-stress cycling, contributing to her children's increased confidence, stamina, and enthusiasm. Katherine describes cycling as not only a transport mode but also an activity with clear wellbeing benefits, and she describes her own reduced stress and improved mood on days when she uses the route.

> ***"I arrived at this meeting feeling properly euphoric… flying down into town. You've got 15–20 minutes of not having to worry too much about cars… it makes such a difference."***

At Women on Wheels, Katherine uses the route extensively for led rides, confidence-building activities, and skills sessions with parents learning to cycle with children.

> ***"In terms of families and increasing active mobility for families, it's really been transformative. I think the impact has been huge especially for family cycling. But I would love there to be more."***

Katherine notes a noticeable increase in women and people cycling on the route in everyday clothing, reflecting a cultural shift towards cycling as normalised and socially embedded.

"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. We had a really nice summer here and the bike lanes were just so busy with people in dresses."

Key takeaway

At peak times, more people are cycling than driving along parts of the South City Way - demonstrating that high-quality, protected routes can make a huge difference to how people travel and to the wider health, environmental and economic vitality of a city.

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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.

Executive summary

The Polegate–Firle shared-use path is a 13 km high-quality, traffic-free 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 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. The route features as a case study in the Active Travel England (2026) Rural Design Guide and its inclusion signals national recognition of the scheme as a leading example of rural infrastructure design.

Key impacts include:

- **Expanded participation and user diversity:** The fully separated route has enabled a range of people to use the corridor, broadening participation beyond confident road cyclists.
- **Improved safety and reduced exposure to traffic risk:** 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 for everyday and leisure journeys:** The route links villages, bus stops, rights of way and employment areas, functioning as both a practical transport corridor and a recreational asset.
- **Integration of active travel within major road investment:** Delivery as part of a strategic highways scheme signals a policy shift towards embedding walking and cycling provision within large-scale transport infrastructure.
- **Environmentally sensitive rural design:** Careful alignment, habitat mitigation and landscape-led design protect the character of the South Downs.

Background and development

Strategic context

Historically, the corridor between Polegate and Firle lacked dedicated active travel infrastructure, despite functioning as an important link between residential and employment areas, and key recreational destinations. The absence of a safe alternative route meant that people either avoided walking and cycling, or they were required to use sections of the high-speed A27 or navigate indirect rural lanes. As traffic volumes increased along the road, safety concerns intensified and suppressed demand for everyday cycling and walking became increasingly apparent.

Strategic planning work led by East Sussex County Council, in partnership with National Highways and relevant landscape authorities, identified the need for a continuous, high-quality route alongside the corridor. The scheme was developed within a broader policy framework including the East Sussex Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (2020), which set out priorities for developing connected walking and cycling infrastructure across East Sussex. It was delivered and funded as part of the A27 East of Lewes Improvement Scheme – a £75 million coordinated package of junction upgrades, safety

improvements, and delivery of the parallel shared-use path to reduce congestion and improve outcomes for all road users. Notably, this departs from the conventional trunk road model of adding capacity to relieve congestion, instead prioritising mode shift by providing viable alternatives to car travel. Embedding the shared-use route within a major highways scheme reflects a growing policy expectation that walking and cycling provision should be integral – rather than secondary – to strategic road investment.

Design and delivery

Extensive engagement with parish councils, residents, landowners, and environmental organisations informed the design of the infrastructure. A public consultation on the full package of A27 East of Lewes Improvement proposals was held in 2016 (National Highways, 2017). Respondents highlighted traffic congestion, safety concerns, and the importance of improved sustainable travel options. 78% of respondents reported that they were very concerned about road safety. Relating to the proposed Polegate–Firle shared-use path, 59% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the route would provide a safer and more attractive/convenient route, and 38% agreed or strongly agreed that the scheme would encourage more people to make trips on foot or by bike. Cycling and rambling groups gave unanimous support for the proposed path.

The collaborative approach and early public engagement ensured the route reflected local character, respected the setting of the South Downs National Park, and responded to community priorities. Construction commenced in March 2020 and included path building, junction upgrades, and new crossing facilities. Works were undertaken in phases to minimise disruption and ecological impacts. The route officially opened in June 2023.

The design focused on:

- Continuous separation from A27 motor traffic, removing the need for vulnerable users to share the carriageway.
- Sensitive integration within a rural and nationally significant landscape.
- Inclusive access for a wide range of users, including pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders, and people using mobility aids.

Crossings, signage, and wayfinding were designed to make navigation clear and intuitive, supporting independent use by a wide range of people. The route was deliberately designed to accommodate a range of users, with surfacing and gradients suitable for pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders, adapted cycles and people using mobility aids. New access points connect nearby villages, bus

stops, and rights of way, ensuring that the path functions not only as a recreational facility but also as a practical route for everyday journeys.

The route was built through fields, behind the hedgerow from the existing highway. Environmental and landscape considerations were central to the planning process, with the alignment and construction designed to protect sensitive chalk downland habitats, preserve biodiversity, and minimise visual impacts on the South Downs National Park. Tree planting, habitat restoration, and careful drainage were implemented as part of the ecological mitigation measures.

Key outcomes

National recognition

The route's inclusion as a Case Study in the Active Travel England (2026) Rural Design Guide reflects its national significance. It is recognised as a model of how fully separated active travel infrastructure can be embedded within a strategic highways scheme from the outset, achieving high standards of safety, accessibility and environmental sensitivity in a rural context. The scheme demonstrates that trunk road improvements can simultaneously enhance sustainable connectivity, support user diversity and protect landscape character – establishing a benchmark for future rural active travel delivery across England.

Increased cycling and user diversity

Whilst there are no formal counts since the development of the Polegate–Firle shared-use path, there is much local evidence and commentary which suggests that there has been an increase in local cycling and positive perceptions amongst residents. Local press coverage documents strong public engagement at the route's official opening in June 2023. Cyclists from across East Sussex attended, with Paul Humphreys, chair of Cycle East Sussex and a member of Bespoke cycle group in Eastbourne, describing the route as transformative and being a ***"game changer for ramblers, cyclists, wheelers and horse riders."*** He emphasised the route's immediate influence on cycling attitudes and participation (Sussex Express, 2023).

User testimonials further illustrate the route's appeal. Since opening in 2023, the route has become a ***"popular hit with walkers, cyclists and horse riders of all ages and abilities"*** according to National Highways (2023a), highlighting a clear shift from specialist to inclusive use. A letter to the editor in *Sussex Express* from a transport and cycling commentator quotes informal counts of around 600 people using a single location on weekends and over 1,000 people across multiple points on a sunny day, including walkers, horse riders, e-scooter users, and cyclists (Sussex Express, 2025). While not derived from formal surveys,

these figures indicate a substantial increase in activity and user diversity compared with the pre-existing situation. The letter also quotes Laura Laker, the author of the book *Potholes and Pavements*, as praising the route and describing it as ***"possibly the best rural cycling and walking route in the country."***

Taken together, these qualitative and quantitative sources suggest that the Polegate–Firle shared-use path has successfully expanded active travel along the corridor, creating a safe, accessible, and attractive environment for a broad spectrum of users who were previously excluded by the road conditions. The route not only supports everyday cycling and walking but also encourages leisure and recreational activity, showing that high-quality, infrastructure which separates cyclists from traffic can unlock latent demand and broaden participation in active travel.

Improved safety

During the planning phase, projected safety outcomes estimated a significant reduction in the risk of incidents involving pedestrians and cyclists along the route, based on comparisons with similar separated rural paths such as the Lewes–Ringmer cycle lane (National Highways, 2020). National Highways describe the route as creating safer connections for users compared with the historic conditions on the high-speed A27 carriageway, and early feedback from users and organisations emphasises enhanced safety and accessibility (National Highways, 2023b). By providing continuous separation from high-speed traffic, the route removes the need for cyclists, pedestrians, and other vulnerable road users to share the carriageway with motor vehicles – a situation that previously discouraged use and created safety risks.

Cost-benefit analysis

Active Travel England's Rural Active Travel Design Guidance reports on a cost-benefit analysis for the Polegate–Firle shared use path. This was undertaken using the Highways England Cycling, Safety and Integration (CSI) Scheme Assessment Report (SAR) spreadsheet, applying the WebTAG active modes appraisal framework to capture a broad range of economic impacts. In the absence of baseline data, demand was estimated using a comparative approach, combining baseline Department for Transport count data with benchmarks from similar schemes to forecast a substantial increase in cycling and walking following delivery. Current cycling levels along the corridor were assumed to be approximately 50 trips per day across the year, and cycling with the scheme in place was assumed to reach an average of 115 trips per day (130% increase) based on the levels of cycling seen on other comparable routes in the area (for example, the A22 and the Lewes Ringmer cycle lane).

The analysis concluded that the Polegate–Firle scheme offers very high value for money, likely to generate benefits of around £8.4 million. Of this total, £4.6 million (over 60%) relates to safety benefits through reduced collisions, based on current cyclists switching to use the new path rather than the live carriageway. Health benefits from increased physical activity formed the second largest contribution, followed by additional gains from reduced congestion, improved journey quality and lower emissions. Overall, the findings highlighted the strong economic case for the scheme and demonstrate the importance of incorporating wider societal benefits in the appraisal of active travel infrastructure.

Key takeaway

High-quality, fully separated rural infrastructure can change who feels able to travel along a corridor – enabling families, older people, less confident cyclists, mobility aid users and recreational walkers to participate safely. The Polegate-Firle shared-use path shows that when safety, accessibility and inclusivity are prioritised, user diversity expands well beyond the previously confident minority.

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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.

Executive summary

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 borough was awarded £30 million in funding from Transport for London, making it one of three Outer London boroughs selected alongside Kingston and Enfield. The initiative was inspired by Dutch urban design principles, prioritising separated cycle infrastructure, low-traffic residential streets, safe junction design, and clear priority for pedestrians and cyclists. A key feature was the delivery of a connected network of cycling routes, enabling whole journeys by bike rather than isolated improvements.

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.

Evaluation findings show significant outcomes across multiple areas:

- **Overall traffic reduction:** reduced car use within the area was not simply displaced elsewhere; there was an overall decrease in traffic.
- **Increased cycling participation:** Residents in high-intervention areas 24% more likely to cycle.
- **Increased active travel:** Total active travel time increased by an average of 41 minutes per week.
- **Long-term behaviour change:** Increases in cycling were sustained over five-years.
- **Inclusive participation:** Benefits seen across age and gender groups, including previously less active residents.
- **Significant health benefits:** Valued at approximately £1 billion in health-economic savings, plus an estimated average 7-9 month gain in people's life expectancy from the overall increase in physical activity.
- **Improved safety:** Safer conditions for cyclists and pedestrians.
- **Environmental improvements:** Reduced traffic, lower emissions, and improved air quality, reduces residents' pollution exposure and increases life expectancy.

Background and delivery

Prior to development, Waltham Forest faced significant transport and environmental challenges, including high traffic volumes, road safety concerns, and poor air quality. Many residents felt unsafe walking or cycling due to limited infrastructure and heavy through-traffic. This contributed to higher reliance on private vehicles compared to inner London, resulting in low levels of active travel and associated public health issues, including physical inactivity (Aldred, Goodman and Woodcock, 2024).

Strategic context

The Mini-Holland programme was informed by earlier London-wide policy commitments to increase cycling and reduce car dependency, particularly the Mayor's Vision for Cycling in London (Mayor of London, 2013). This strategy introduced the Mini-Holland concept and committed significant investment to high-quality cycling infrastructure, with a particular focus on Outer London boroughs. It emphasised the need for safer streets, separated cycle routes, and

interventions that would enable cycling to become a practical transport choice for everyday journeys.

This vision was implemented by Transport for London (2014) through a competitive funding programme, through which Waltham Forest was awarded £30 million in 2014. The programme also aligned with broader strategic planning objectives set out in the London Plan, which promotes sustainable transport, reduced car use, and healthier urban environments (Greater London Authority, 2016).

At the local level, Waltham Forest's Local Implementation Plan (London Borough of Waltham Forest, 2013) helped shape the borough's Mini-Holland bid by identifying priorities around road safety, air quality, and increasing active travel. The Mini-Holland programme subsequently became the primary mechanism for delivering these objectives at scale.

Programme development

Initial delivery included a pilot in Walthamstow Village, where temporary road closures and modal filters were introduced to test the impact on traffic and active travel before permanent implementation. Building on the pilot, delivery across the borough was phased and adaptive, with some measures introduced on a trial basis before being made permanent following monitoring and consultation.

The programme used a 'high-dose approach', whereby a comprehensive package of measures was implemented in selected areas. High-dose interventions were prioritised where they could have the greatest impact on travel behaviour, providing a stronger incentive for residents to switch from car use to cycling or walking (Aldred, Croft and Goodman, 2019).

Key measures included:

- **Separated cycle routes** on main roads such as Lea Bridge Road.
- **Low Traffic Neighbourhoods** (LTNs) and pedestrianised streets to reduce through-traffic.
- **Cycle hubs and secure parking**, including facilities in Leyton.
- **Safer crossings and traffic calming measures.**
- **Public realm improvements**, such as widened footways and planting.

A key feature of the programme was the integration of cycling routes and low-traffic streets into a coherent borough-wide network, enabling residents to make complete journeys by bike rather than relying on isolated improvements.

Initial controversy

The scheme faced some initial opposition, with some drivers lobbying for a reversal of interventions, highlighting the challenges of reallocating road space in established suburban areas (London Evening Standard, 2018a). Despite the initial controversy, longitudinal survey data indicates that public support increased over time as residents experienced the benefits of reduced traffic and improved street environments.

Key outcomes

Short- and long-term evaluations of the Mini-Holland programme were conducted by academics at the University of Westminster and funded by Transport for London. An early study reported by Aldred, Croft and Goodman (2019) assessed short-term impacts after approximately one year, focusing on cycling and walking behaviour, street safety, and resident perceptions in Outer London boroughs, including Waltham Forest. The longer-term study (Aldred, Goodman and Woodcock, 2024) used the People and Places longitudinal survey over five years to assess sustained changes in active travel, health outcomes, and public perceptions, comparing intervention areas with matched control areas (Outer London boroughs without Mini-Holland schemes). The evaluation combined resident surveys, traffic counts, and observational studies, enabling robust assessment of both short- and long-term impacts of the Mini-Holland programme.

Cycling uptake and active travel

Evidence from the early-stage evaluation showed that, after approximately one year, residents in high-dose intervention areas were 24% more likely to have cycled in the previous week, and total active travel time increased by an average of 41 minutes per week (Aldred, Croft and Goodman, 2019). High-dose interventions in Waltham Forest, including cycle lanes separated from traffic, LTNs, and pedestrianised streets, drove these early behaviour changes.

The longer-term evaluation shows that these early increases in cycling were maintained over five years. Residents in LTN areas were consistently more likely to have cycled at least once in the past week compared with control areas, and they spent around 23–29 minutes more per week cycling at different survey waves (Aldred, Goodman and Woodcock, 2024). These results demonstrate that Mini-Holland interventions not only encouraged more people to cycle but also increased the time spent cycling, indicating a lasting change in travel behaviour.

Importantly, increases in active travel were observed across a range of demographic groups, including different age and gender categories, with evidence that individuals with lower baseline activity levels experienced the greatest gains (Aldred, Goodman and Woodcock, 2024). The scheme therefore supported broader participation rather than benefiting only existing cyclists.

Sarah Lambert, a parent living in Walthamstow, said it has transformed how she travels with her children.

> ***"A lot of the roads were previously used as rat runs during rush hour, and it was really busy. There was more traffic that you would feel comfortable with when you're walking with small children. And now that's all been changed and it's so much nicer for the kids. I would never have let my kids cycle to school before, I just I didn't think it was safe. Now we cycle every day, which is amazing. It's a nice part of everyone's day, and it's also, on a practical level, much quicker."***

Improved health outcomes

The health benefits of increased active travel are among the most compelling outcomes of the Mini-Holland programme. By increasing walking and cycling, the programme contributed to significant gains in physical activity.

Sarah has also noticed the benefits of this.

> ***"We all live a way more sedentary life than we used to. Any way you can get physical activity into your day without it having to be a thing – just being part of getting to A to B – can only ever be a positive thing for adults, for children, for anyone."***

The Waltham Forest local authority commissioned research from King's College London to estimate the health benefits of the Mini-Holland programme in terms of impact on life expectancy (King's College London, 2018a). The study used local travel survey data and applied the King's College lifetable tool to estimate gains in life years from increased physical activity. Impacts from the school run were modelled assuming some car journeys were replaced by walking, scooting, or cycling.

The research found that, overall, increases in walking and cycling could provide the population with around 204,000 life years over a lifetime, equivalent to an increase in average life expectancy of 7–9 months. For the school run specifically, the total potential health benefit from projected walking and cycling levels was estimated at 13,000–17,000 life years (2–3 weeks of life expectancy). Of this, 2,000–6,000 life years represent the gains directly

attributable to observed increases in school-run activity during the period 2013–2020. These estimates only capture travel-related activity (including adults accompanying children) and are based on survey data, so they represent indicative rather than precise benefits.

The longitudinal evaluation by the University of Westminster included health economic modelling to estimate the monetary value of the programme's physical activity benefits over a 20year period (Aldred, Goodman and Woodcock, 2024).

Key findings include:

- An estimated £1 billion in health economic benefits (including the savings from avoided sick days and prevented deaths), attributable primarily to increased physical activity – roughly ten times the scheme's implementation cost.

- In areas with LTNs, the benefit per person from increased activity was estimated at around £4,800 over 20 years, far exceeding costs per person (which were estimated at roughly £28–£112 depending on intervention type).

Safety and environmental benefits

The Mini-Holland programme contributed to lower local emissions, improved air quality, and safer streets, supporting wider environmental and public health goals.

Transport for London's Cycle Safety and Mode Share Briefing (2025) indicates that areas with comprehensive cycle infrastructure – similar to that delivered under Mini-Holland – generally experience lower rates of serious collisions involving cyclists and pedestrians, even as cycling levels increase. Surveys indicate that 76% of cyclists using protected cycleways feel safe "all or most of the time" (Transport for London, 2025). Early attitudinal surveys in Waltham Forest found that residents' perceptions of street safety, quality, and neighbourhood attractiveness improved, particularly in areas with LTNs, cycle routes separated from traffic, and pedestrianised streets (Aldred, Croft and Goodman, 2019).

Environmental improvements were observed in and around intervention areas. In the Walthamstow Village pilot, daily traffic flows dropped by approximately 22%, and average speeds reduced from 22.3mph to 21mph (moving closer to the 20mph limit) (Department for Transport, 2016). Reductions in car use and ownership were also observed longer-term. LTNs were associated with significant declines in car ownership (about 6%) and reduced car use over

time, indicating that active travel infrastructure can help shift households away from private vehicle reliance (Aldred, Goodman and Woodcock, 2024; Goodman, Urban and Aldred, 2020). The evidence shows that, while concerns were initially raised about traffic displacement, the reductions in through-traffic were not fully offset elsewhere, indicating a degree of overall traffic reduction rather than simple redistribution (Aldred, Goodman and Woodcock, 2024).

The King's College London research also modelled the air quality impact of interventions (King's College London, 2018b), estimating reductions in population exposure to NO_2 of 15–25% and PM2.5 of 6–13%. Improvements in air quality were projected to provide around 41,000 life years and increase average life expectancy by about 1.5 months, compared with 2013 concentrations. As with the health estimates, these figures are based on modelling assumptions and represent indicative benefits.

Key takeaway

The Mini-Holland programme in Waltham Forest shows that targeted investment in cycling infrastructure and low-traffic streets can transform suburban travel behaviour. Despite some early controversy, long-term evidence demonstrates that such interventions increase active travel, reduce road danger, lower air pollution, and generate substantial life expectancy and health-economic benefits, providing a strong model for similar suburban initiatives elsewhere.

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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.

Executive summary

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 scheme is widely regarded as one of Birmingham’s most recognisable examples of fully separated cycling infrastructure on a major arterial road. 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, encouraging confident cycling among new and returning riders, particularly women, and has informed subsequent active travel projects in the city.

Key impacts of the A38 Blue Route include:

- **Increased cycling uptake:** Automated counters report sustained average daily volumes of around 500 cyclists, with year-round use even in less favourable weather.
- **Significant safety improvements:** Risk of serious injury has dropped to roughly one-third of pre-route levels.
- **Enhanced confidence for women and new cyclists:** The route enables safe, confident travel for women, new cyclists, and everyday users, supporting independent journeys across the city.
- **Social connectivity and community engagement:** 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 cycling infrastructure can be integrated into busy arterial roads without compromising safety or traffic flow.

Background and development

The A38 Blue Route was developed as part of the Birmingham Cycle Revolution programme, reflecting a broader shift in local transport policy towards supporting active travel, improving public health, reducing congestion, and contributing to wider environmental and decarbonisation objectives (Birmingham City Council, 2020). It was funded through a combination of the Department for Transport's Cycle City Ambition Grant and the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership's Local Growth Fund (Birmingham City Council, 2019). The A38 was identified as a strategic priority due to its direct alignment between residential areas, major employment and education destinations, and the city centre.

Early consultation undertaken through the Birmingham Be Heard platform had highlighted strong latent demand for safe, separated cycling infrastructure. Survey responses indicated that 53% of respondents said they would use the new cycle route and 37% of current car drivers stated that they were likely to switch to cycling if high quality cycling provision was provided (Birmingham Be Heard, 2019). This evidence supported the case for investment and informed the scheme's development.

The distinctive blue surface of the route was introduced as part of the Birmingham Cycle Revolution programme to provide a clear visual identity and reinforce the separation of cycling space from general traffic, supporting both safety perception and behaviour change among new and existing cyclists, helping cyclists to be able to follow the route without confusion.

Since completion, the A38 Blue Route has influenced subsequent cycling schemes in Birmingham and proposals for further extensions along the corridor. Improvements, including junction refinements and feeder routes, have aimed to strengthen connections with surrounding neighbourhoods. Birmingham City Council is currently progressing proposals to extend the route southwards towards Longbridge. Consultation feedback and local campaign evidence suggest ongoing demand, with survey responses showing that 56% of respondents were in favour of the introduction of the proposed extension to the cycle route (Birmingham Be Heard, 2025). In addition, the Walking and Cycling Index for Birmingham also showed that 58% of Birmingham residents want to cycle more, 61% say that more cycle paths along roads that are physically separated from traffic and pedestrians would help them to cycle more, and 56% support building physically separated cycle paths along roads, even when this means less room for other traffic (Walk Wheel Cycle Trust, 2023).

Key outcomes

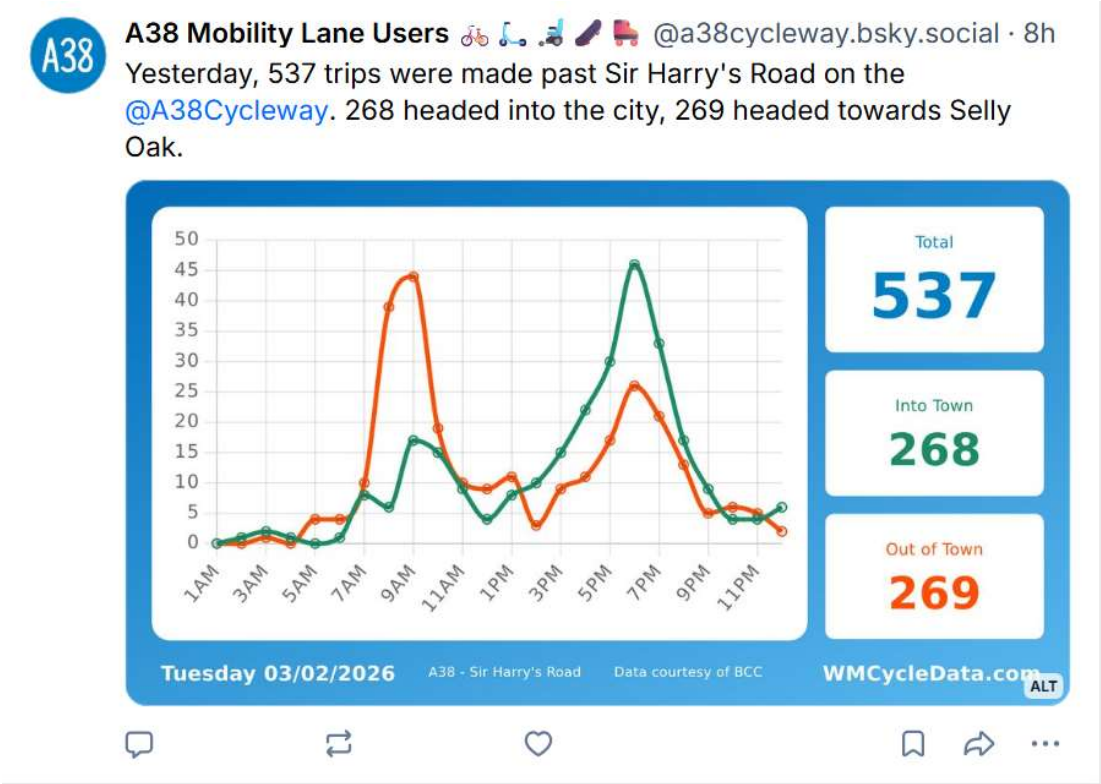
Cycling uptake

The A38 Blue Route is among the most monitored cycle corridors in the West Midlands, with automated cycling detection systems forming part of the wider regional monitoring network. These detection systems, operated by Transport for West Midlands and Birmingham City Council and visualised through platforms such as the West Midlands Cyclotron, capture daily cycling volumes and enable longitudinal comparison with other key cycle routes in the region (West Midlands Cyclotron, 2025).

Comprehensive automated counter data from before the route's completion is limited, as many of the counters were installed around the time of delivery or afterwards. However, the available post-implementation figures demonstrate sustained and significant usage.

Data presented via the West Midlands Cyclotron indicates that between February 2023 and January 2024, the A38 Blue Route's monitored point on Bristol Road recorded an average of approximately 501 cyclists per day, higher than other major routes such as Coventry's Sky Blue Way (385 cyclists per day) and the A34 Newton Middleway Blue Route (284 cyclists per day) (West Midlands Cyclotron, 2025).

The cycle counters feed data into publicly accessible dashboards (West Midlands Cycle Data, 2026) that provide transparent insight into usage trends. To further increase visibility and public engagement, daily counts are shared via social media feeds such @a38cycleway.bsky.social with an example post below.



Cyclotron data for the A38 Blue Route also indicates modest seasonal variation in cycle volumes, with usage remaining relatively consistent throughout the year compared with the sharper winter declines typically observed on unprotected on-road routes. Daily counts remain substantial even during less favourable weather conditions, suggesting that the presence of a separated, high-quality cycle facility may help sustain year-round use (Jon Freer, 2024).

Improved road safety and risk reduction

The PHOEBE Consortium, an international road safety research initiative, assessed the A38 Blue Route along Bristol Road using the CycleRAP (Cycling Road Assessment Programme) methodology. This involved the use of photographs taken with handlebar mounted smartphones every 10 meters along the route to evaluate road infrastructure for cyclist safety based on features such as segregation, lane width, junction design, and roadside hazards, providing a predictive risk assessment (PHOEBE Consortium, 2025).

The CycleRAP assessment found that the risk of people being killed or seriously injured along the A38 Blue Route dropped to approximately one-third of pre-route levels, indicating a substantial safety improvement associated with the introduction of the separated cycleway. This includes the route's central reservation section, dedicated cycle signals, and continuous separation, which reduce conflict points with motor traffic.

While the PHOEBE study focuses on risk modelling rather than large-scale health outcomes, it provides some of the most direct and locally specific evidence of improved cyclist safety linked to the A38 Blue Route.

Improving feelings of safety

Users of the route also spoke about the feeling of safety when cycling on the route. Khalda Begum is a ride leader with Share Calthorpe Community Cycle Club and uses the blue route to introduce new or less experienced cyclists to road cycling.

> ***"Because it is in the middle of the road, it gives you a feeling of being on the road, with cars near to you, but you have the safety and comfort of being separated from the cars. It gives the experience of road cycling, but with less risk."***

Khalda described the route as helping women in particular to develop in confidence, and that many women that she had trained using the blue route were now cycling independently both on the blue route and on other Birmingham roads. She described that routes like the blue route are crucial for building confidence in new riders and particularly women.

> ***"It's really sad that in this day and age so many women are still fearful to cycle -so many of them feel intimidated on the roads. But you see women's confidence build as they start to know their rights on the road and feel comfortable amongst the traffic on a route like this."***

Social connectivity and community engagement

The A38 Blue Route connects multiple key destinations, including educational institutions, healthcare facilities, and residential areas, fostering social interactions and community connectivity. Routes like this help create inclusive access to employment, education, and health services.

> ***"It's lovely cycling around the park, but if you want to incorporate cycling into your everyday living then you do need to get out onto the roads to get from A to B. The blue route connects to so many places in the city centre, including to the university, hospital and shops."***

(Khalda Begum, Ride Leader)

Key takeaway

The A38 Blue Route shows that creative use of existing road space, combined with continuous, fully separated infrastructure, can make cycling safe, attractive, and visible, encouraging more everyday trips and fostering confident, inclusive participation across communities.

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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.

Executive summary

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. Part of National Cycle Network Route 99, the Greenway supports both recreational and everyday journeys, functioning as one of Belfast's main cycling corridors and a key link between neighbourhoods and the city centre. Its gentle gradients make it suitable for commuting and leisure journeys. The Greenway won a European Greenway Award in 2009 for route quality, environmental protection, and community connectivity.

A major improvement in 2024 has been the introduction of red-spectrum, bat-friendly LED lighting along key urban sections. This addresses declines in evening and winter use, extends functional hours, and improves safety. Research shows lighting increases cycling after dark, particularly among less confident users, supporting year-round active travel.

Key outcomes include:

- **Increased cycling levels:** Even before the installation of new lighting cycling numbers grew from 26% of trips in 2003 to 54% by 2015, becoming the dominant mode of travel.
- **Sustained growth in usage:** Overall journeys using the Greenway increased from around 45,000 in 2004 to 245,000 by 2012.
- **Improved safety and confidence:** 81% of users supported urban lighting, reflecting high perceived safety and community backing.
- **Evidence that lighting reduces seasonal drops in usage:** December trips were nearly 50% lower than June before the addition of the lighting, indicating potential for winter and evening growth.

Background and development

The Comber Greenway was developed through a partnership led by Sustrans Northern Ireland, working with Belfast City Council, Ards and North Down Borough Council, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, and the former Department for Regional Development. Key features include reinstated bridges over the River Enler and farm lanes, and toucan crossings at major roads such as Knock Road and Comber Road. The route links to Belfast's wider walking and cycling network, and is near the Connswater Community Greenway, supporting a coherent active travel system as referenced in the Belfast City Air Quality Action Plan 2021–2026 (Belfast City Council, 2021).

The Comber Greenway's phased development has been supported through a combination of public investment and grant funding. Initial capital to complete the route to Comber included around £1 million in government and EU funding secured by Sustrans and partners, with further targeted improvements costing approximately £570,000, jointly funded by the Department for Infrastructure and the Department for Communities through regeneration programmes. Later upgrades, including rural widening schemes, were funded at an estimated £100,000. Strategic plans by the Department for Infrastructure, including its Greenways Strategy, have guided ongoing investment, while local authorities have secured additional funding — notably £3.2 million through the UK Levelling Up Fund in January 2023 to support extensions toward Newtownards, with planning approval for this section granted in January 2025 as part of a broader regional greenways network valued at approximately £4.36 million (Ards and North Down Borough Council, 2025).

Lighting improvements

A significant development on the Comber Greenway was the introduction of lighting to key sections of the route, reflecting growing recognition that darkness can function as a barrier to year-round active travel. While the Greenway is well used as a daytime corridor, limited lighting meant that its use declined during evening hours and throughout the winter months. Department for Infrastructure data showed that although overall usage increased substantially—by around 80% between April 2020 and March 2021—journeys dropped off significantly during darker periods, with December usage almost half that recorded in June (Department for Infrastructure, 2021). This highlighted the influence of seasonal daylight variation on how the route was used, particularly for commuting.

In response, the pilot lighting scheme was introduced in 2024 along the urban section between Beersbridge Road and Billy Neill Halt. The lighting operates during hours of darkness, up to 10:30 pm and from 6:00 am, aligning with typical commuting times.

The scheme was designed not only to improve visibility and user safety, but also to extend the functional hours of the Greenway.

A key feature of the scheme is the use of red-spectrum, bat-friendly LED lighting, which reduces disturbance to nocturnal wildlife while still providing sufficient illumination for users. This approach reflects an emerging design principle in greenway development: balancing accessibility and safety with environmental protection.

The installation is being treated as a pilot, with monitoring in place to assess impacts on usage, safety, and ecological conditions, and to inform potential future expansion along the full 11 km route.

Image by Signify

Community engagement

The Comber Greenway was developed with communities and users at its centre, and with consultation taking place at all stages of development. For example, a lighting consultation received around 1,700 responses, with the majority of users supporting the introduction of lighting on the Greenway — 81% of users supported lighting the urban section, and 58% supported extending lighting along the whole route (Department for Infrastructure, 2021). This highlights

strong community interest and engagement with how the Greenway is developed and improved.

The One Path Initiative, led by Sustrans with support from local authorities, used surveys, focus groups and on-site observation to understand how people experienced and used the Greenway in everyday life (Walk Wheel Cycle Trust, 2017; 2018). By capturing who was using the route, when, and for what purposes, the initiative ensured that upgrades were shaped by real patterns of use rather than assumptions. Feedback from users highlighted issues such as crowding, comfort, and the need for clearer wayfinding and safer crossings, directly informing later design decisions including path widening, surface improvements and subsequent enhancement phases. This evidence-led, participatory approach helped ensure the Comber Greenway evolved as an inclusive, well-used shared space that reflects the needs of the communities it serves.

Key outcomes

Sustained growth in use and cycling

Long-term monitoring shows sustained and significant growth in use of the Comber Greenway. Estimated annual usage reported by the One Path Initiative shows increases from around 45,000 trips by all users in 2004 to 122,000 in 2007, reaching 245,000 by 2012 (Walk Wheel Cycle Trust, 2017).

Survey evidence from the One Path Initiative provides insight into how and why the Greenway is used. Early intercept surveys showed that pedestrians initially made up the majority of users (74% in 2003), but cycling grew steadily over time, rising to 40% by 2007 and becoming the dominant mode by 2015 with cycling accounting for 54% of all trips. While most trips were for leisure, a consistent proportion were utility journeys such as commuting and shopping. Usage patterns showed clear morning and evening peaks among cyclists, indicating the Greenway's role in supporting everyday travel and commuting as well as recreation. Importantly, a substantial proportion of users reported using the route daily or weekly — 43% daily use in 2003 and 33% in 2007 — demonstrating that the Greenway supports regular physical activity and forms part of everyday routines for many local residents.

Usage has continued to rise in recent years. Automatic counters recorded increases between 2017 and 2020 across multiple locations. For example, user numbers at Beersbridge Road rose from 189,000 (2017-2018) to 215,000 (2018-2019) (Belfast Telegraph, 2020).

Impact of lighting on cycling and year-round use

Although full evaluation of the Comber Greenway lighting scheme is ongoing, both local data and wider research indicate that lighting can play a significant

role in increasing cycling levels and supporting year-round use of active travel infrastructure.

Baseline data for the Greenway showed clear seasonal variation in usage, with significantly lower levels of walking and cycling during darker winter months. This pattern is consistent with broader evidence that reduced daylight limits the use of traffic-free routes, particularly for commuting journeys that take place outside daylight hours.

Local resident Traci Adams described the impact of the new lighting:

> ***"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".***

UK research provides strong evidence of lighting's effect on cycling behaviour. For example, studies in Birmingham found unlit routes experienced much greater reductions in cycling after dark compared to lit routes, highlighting lighting as a key factor in maintaining evening and winter usage (Uttley, Fotios and Lovelace, 2020). Reviews of the wider literature also conclude that lighting improves perceived safety, visibility, and personal security, which is particularly important for less confident cyclists and underrepresented groups (Vidal-Tortosa and Lovelace, 2024).

Research by Walk Wheel Cycle Trust (2018) emphasises the gender dimension: darkness can deter women from cycling due to personal safety concerns. In urban areas, only 23% of women and 36% of men reported feeling safe cycling in the dark, suggesting that lighting may help reduce gender disparities in cycling participation.

In the context of the Comber Greenway, the introduction of lighting therefore has the potential to extend the usable hours of the route and support a shift from predominantly daylight recreational use towards more consistent, year-round utility cycling. By enabling safer travel during early mornings, evenings, and winter months, lighting may strengthen the Greenway's role as a commuting corridor and increase its overall contribution to sustainable transport in Belfast.

Improved safety and confidence

The Comber Greenway is widely valued as one of Belfast's safest cycling routes, and its growing usage demonstrates strong public support for traffic free infrastructure. The Belfast Walking and Cycling Index (Walk Wheel Cycle Trust, 2025) highlights that 81% of residents support improving and increasing local off-road walking, wheeling and cycling paths. The report found that demand for

cycling in the city is constrained not by lack of interest, but by a lack of safe, protected infrastructure. A majority of Belfast residents want more traffic free cycle routes and physically protected cycle tracks, and many see cycling as a way to reduce congestion and make streets more socially vibrant. A high proportion of residents believe that more cycling would improve their local area, and there is strong support for reallocating space from motor vehicles to walking and cycling. By providing a predominantly traffic-free corridor, the Comber Greenway addresses these safety concerns and encourages more people to choose cycling for both leisure and everyday trips.

Users and stakeholders consistently describe the Comber Greenway as a valued and safe space for active travel. In comments at its opening, Sustrans director for Northern Ireland, Steven Patterson said:

> ***"The completed Greenway gives the 150,000 people living in its vicinity an attractive and safer route for walking and cycling than the busy nearby road."*** (quoted in Belfast Telegraph, 2008)

The Greenway's safety and accessibility were also emphasised during a Northern Ireland Assembly Adjournment Debate in March 2020, where East Belfast MLA Robin Newton noted that the route provides ***"an opportunity to re-engage with nature and to exercise in a traffic-free environment"***, also highlighting its value for users of all ages and abilities. Minister for Infrastructure Nichola Mallon acknowledged rising usage and reaffirmed government commitment to ongoing improvements, demonstrating strong political and community recognition of the route's safety and broader benefits.

Wider impacts of cycling in Belfast

While not specific to the Comber Greenway, the Belfast Walking and Cycling Index 2025 report provides robust evidence of the broader benefits of cycling across the city, which the Comber Greenway contributes to directly. The report shows that cycling delivers significant health, economic, and environmental benefits. It prevents long-term health conditions, contributing to reduced NHS costs, while the mode shift from car travel improves air quality by lowering nitrogen oxides and particulate emissions (Walk Wheel Cycle Trust, 2025). Economic modelling suggests that cycling generates around £59.9 million in net annual benefit across Belfast, including savings from reduced congestion, lower vehicle operating costs, fewer work absences, and increased local spending.

Research on urban greenways in Belfast provides additional context for the potential wider impacts of routes like the Comber Greenway. A social return on investment analysis of the nearby Connswater Community Greenway found that for every £1 invested, there is an estimated £2–£6 of social and economic benefit over the project's lifetime (Hunter et al., 2020). This includes benefits

from improved health, wellbeing, environmental protection, local economic activity, and strengthened community cohesion. These findings highlight how high-quality greenway infrastructure can deliver broad, long-term value beyond transport alone.

Taken together, these insights suggest that the Comber Greenway, as one of Belfast's most heavily used active travel corridors, likely contributes to healthier lifestyles, greater community cohesion, cleaner air, and economic benefits, reinforcing its role within the city's broader active travel and sustainability agenda.

Key takeaway

The introduction of lighting has transformed the Comber Greenway into a safe, year-round cycling corridor, boosting evening and winter use. Sustained growth, strong community support, and social, economic, and environmental benefits show the power of well-designed, inclusive greenways.

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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.

Executive summary

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. Delivered by Bradford Council in partnership with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and funded largely through the UK government's Transforming Cities Fund, 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. The transformation also 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 project has been widely recognised for its innovation, sustainability, and impact, establishing a national benchmark for people-focused urban design.

Key impacts include:

- **Cycling and active travel:** 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% biodiversity net gain, new trees and planting, and sustainable drainage systems.
- **Economic impact:** Footfall in the city centre increased by 25% in early 2025 compared to 2024, supporting local businesses and cultural tourism.
- **Community and social value:** Over £9.8 million of social value from volunteering, donations, and school engagement.
- **National recognition:** The project has received multiple awards, highlighting its significance and excellence in urban regeneration and active-travel design.

Background and delivery

Strategic context

Prior to transformation, Bradford city centre was dominated by vehicle traffic on key roads, which acted as barriers to walking and cycling and contributed to poor air quality and an unattractive public environment. Pedestrian and cycling infrastructure were limited, making it difficult for people to navigate between transport hubs, retail areas, and cultural venues.

Satwant Singh, founder of Bolton Road Community Cycling Club explained how cycling could be difficult before the regeneration of the city centre.

> ***"Many times you had very close passes. You had to be very cautious of how you're riding and be aware of all the surroundings. When I used to go home, I had to go on the main road, and there was so much heavy traffic, with everybody in their cars rushing back."***

The transformation forms part of a wider regional strategy under the Transforming Cities Fund to improve sustainable transport, reduce carbon emissions, and support economic growth through active travel. In Bradford, the scheme was complemented by projects including improved access to Bradford Interchange, a new park-and-ride facility, and the West Bradford Cycle

Superhighway extension, which together create a connected active-travel network linking neighbourhoods to jobs, education, and services.

Bradford's designation as UK City of Culture 2025 provided a strategic backdrop for the city centre transformation, reinforcing the city's ambition to create a vibrant, accessible, and people-focused urban environment. A year-long programme of over 5,000 cultural events attracted over three million visitors (Bradford 2025, 2025), boosting footfall and showcasing the city's heritage. By improving pedestrianised areas, cycling routes, and public spaces, the street transformation project complemented these cultural initiatives, providing safe, attractive, and connected streets that facilitated access to venues, encouraged active travel, and supported community participation.

Key design features and delivery

Construction began in mid-2023 and was delivered in phases, with major works completed in early 2025. Streets including Hall Ings, Market Street, Bridge Street, Bank Street, and Broadway were redesigned to prioritise walking, cycling, and public space, representing a shift from a vehicle-dominated environment to a people-centred network. Project documentation notes that these improvements were designed to ***"make walking and cycling a more attractive option for getting around"*** (Your Voice, 2025), addressing barriers created by traffic-dominated streets and connecting residents to transport hubs, workplaces, and cultural destinations. Cycling infrastructure was a central element of the transformation:

- **Approximately 2.4 km of new cycle lanes were installed**, including fully separated lanes to separate cyclists from motor traffic.
- **Key junctions and crossings were redesigned** with cycle-specific signals and bike boxes, improving accessibility and reducing conflict points with vehicles.
- **The network connects seamlessly** to the West Bradford Cycle Superhighway and other regional routes, creating a continuous active-travel corridor linking residential areas to the city centre.
- **Cycle parking was installed near major destinations** including Bradford Interchange, shopping areas, and cultural venues to encourage commuting by bike.
- **Extensive pedestrianisation complemented the cycling network** by removing through-traffic and creating shared streets that prioritise non-motorised users, enhancing the attractiveness of cycling in the city centre.

A key feature of the city centre transformation is Norfolk Gardens, a large urban green space which integrates cycle routes and shared paths into landscaped areas. Public transport infrastructure was also upgraded with new bus routes and stops, ensuring that cycling and public transport modes are integrated, allowing easy multi-modal trips into the city centre.

Innovation and recognition

The Bradford City Centre Transformation is a bold and innovative, people-focused project that reallocated streets from vehicle-dominated corridors to pedestrian and cycle priority routes. The project creates safe and user friendly active-travel corridors, supporting sustainable access to key destinations and Bradford's City of Culture 2025 programme. The transformation sets a national benchmark for integrating cycling, public space, and green infrastructure to enhance safety, accessibility, and urban life.

The project has been widely recognised for its achievements, winning multiple national and regional awards. Key accolades include:

- Civic Trust Award 2026
- Pro Landscaper Sustainability & Biodiversity Awards 2025 – Local Authority Award and Commercial Build Project Award, after being shortlisted in multiple sustainability and landscape categories.
- Yorkshire & Humber Constructing Excellence Awards 2025 – Best Infrastructure Project and Best of the Best
- Landscape Institute Awards 2025 – Excellence in Place Regeneration
- Healthy City Design International Congress – Healthy Transport and Mobility Award

Key outcomes

Economic impact

Bradford city centre has experienced a notable increase in activity following the completion of the transformation works. Data from the Bradford Business Improvement District (reported in Bradford Means Business, 2025) indicates that footfall increased by approximately 25% in the first quarter of 2025 compared with the same period in 2024, suggesting that the improved public spaces and people-friendly environment are encouraging more people to visit the city centre. In addition, the data shows not only a growth in numbers visiting the city centre, but increased dwell time – the amount of time people spend in

the city centre once they are there. While these increases are likely to be influenced by a combination of the transformation project and Bradford's UK City of Culture 2025 events, the improved accessibility and public realm have played a significant role in supporting higher visitor numbers.

Environmental impact

The transformation has delivered significant environmental benefits in Bradford through new green infrastructure, reduced traffic, and sustainable urban design. The project created approximately 12,000 m² of green space, featuring hundreds of trees and planting designed to enhance biodiversity and urban ecology. The project is reported as having achieved a biodiversity net gain of 24–27%, with Norfolk Gardens alone containing over 7,700 plants and shrubs across 173 species, including 57 trees, contributing to richer urban habitats (Constructing Excellence, 2025; Future Bradford, 2025).

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems were installed to manage rainfall and increase resilience to flooding, while reducing through-traffic has lowered emissions and noise pollution. In early 2025 as the project neared completion, Councillor Alex Ross-Shaw noted that:

> ***"We are already seeing the benefits of moving the heavy traffic out of the core of the city centre. Air quality has improved, and the new traffic-free public spaces are making it easier to get around and between shopping and entertainment areas."***
>
> (Reported in Construction News, 2025)

By summer 2026, the improvements were even more noticeable, according to resident James Craig.

> ***"The air quality has improved in Bradford a lot since they introduced the Clean Air Zone and the environment is just so much nicer in the city centre. It's all pedestrianised now… Not mixing with polluting vehicles and so on."***

Community impact and social value

The transformation has delivered significant community and social benefits, alongside its physical improvements to streets and public spaces. According to Constructing Excellence (2025), the project has generated over £9.8 million in social value, achieved through over 377 hours of volunteering, £8,000 of donations to local initiatives, and 144 hours of educational engagement, promoting awareness of sustainable transport and cycling in schools. Residents and community groups contributed to consultations and design workshops, ensuring the new streets and cycling routes responded to local needs. This

engagement helped shape safe and accessible cycling infrastructure, pedestrian areas, and green spaces, ensuring they were valued and well-used by the community.

The increase in green space has been well-received by local people. Resident Norah McWilliam described how ***"the city centre is so much nicer now. All the re-landscaping 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. "***

Stewart Ross is a guide dog owner and part of Bradford Association of Visually Impaired People. He emphasised the importance of engaging with disabled people during the construction phase, to ensure that people can navigate around while things are changing. But overall, he said it has been a huge improvement.

> ***"What's there now is brilliant. Life is a lot easier with the increase in the amount of pedestrianised space. I have a guide dog, and he knows his way around now. You don't have to worry about the traffic, because there isn't any."***

Cycling uptake and modal shift

While formal post-completion cycling data for Bradford's transformation is not yet available, the project contributes to the regional Transforming Cities Fund targets, which forecast that walking and cycling trips across West Yorkshire could increase by up to 7% by 2036, and that up to 12 million car trips per year could be removed from the region's roads as people shift to active and public transport modes (West Yorkshire Combined Authority, 2025). These regional targets indicate the scale of modal shift that improved cycling infrastructure, such as that delivered in Bradford, is intended to support.

Fozia Naseem and Shahida Kishver run beginner cycling sessions with Hop on Yorkshire. Fozia explained how the changes have made a difference to the routes they are able to use for their rides.

> ***"There are so many great places for cyclists in Bradford now, because it's opened up, especially City Park. We've been bringing our cyclists in there as groups and they've absolutely loved riding around the city, which has been great."***

Shahida agreed:

> ***"Since the new infrastructure has been in place, I've been out on the roads a lot more, taking people out onto that part of the infrastructure.***
>
> ***For us, that's been fantastic because it gives people the confidence to ride alongside traffic without being in traffic initially. Then maybe they'll take that next step where they think, if we can ride alongside traffic, we can ride on the roads – just building up confidence."***

The new routes have also encouraged more people from underrepresented groups to cycle, as Shahida has noticed.

> ***"I've seen quite a few people who haven't even trained with us, who are now making those short journeys. We never used to see Asian women on bikes. But I'm seeing quite a lot of people out there now, which is great."***

Key takeaway

The Bradford City Centre transformation demonstrates how bold, people-focused urban design can improve cycling and walking infrastructure, enhance public spaces, boost economic activity, and deliver measurable environmental and social benefits. It sets a national benchmark for sustainable, connected, and vibrant city centre regeneration.

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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.

Executive summary

It is now possible to cycle across Cardiff city centre and to key destinations largely without having to mix with motor traffic, due to the development of two strategic routes as part of Cardiff's overall network plan.

Cycleway 1 is the most complete of the six planned routes: a two-way protected cycle path with cycle-specific lights. It takes riders from the city centre to the University Hospital of Wales. The Cross City Route forms the hub of the planned network. While still subject to redesign and completion, it is sufficiently developed to facilitate journeys to many parts of the city.

The temporary nature of the Cross City Route has allowed rapid iterations to be made, such as modifications to junctions and lights. In its final form, part of the route between North Road and West Grove will be placed on the opposite side of the road, to allow for a safer and less interrupted journey. It demonstrates how testing ideas, listening to feedback and incremental improvements can generate infrastructure that works for residents, workers and visitors to the capital.

Key outcomes include:

- **Increased cycling levels:** Cycle flows increased by 50% to 72% on key sections of the routes.
- **Improved safety perceptions:** Satisfaction with cycling lanes increased by 8%; proportion of residents rating cycling as 'safe' rose by 4% and 'somewhat safe' by 8%.
- **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.

Background and development

The first part of Cycleway 1 was completed in 2019: a section of two-way protected path along St Andrew's Place and Senghenydd Road past the Sherman Theatre. Over the years the other sections linking it with the city centre and the University Hospital have been completed.

Cllr Sarah Merry, Deputy Leader of Cardiff Council, explained that there were some challenges with the removal of car parking spaces in a densely populated area.

> ***"There was certainly opposition to removal of parking in an area like Cathays, where there is always pressure on parking due to high density housing. Some of the opposition remains, even though by introducing zonal parking in the local area (resident-only or time restricted parking) the overall parking available to residents was increased.***
>
> ***There are a lot of rental properties facing on to the cycle lane, and people are aware now if they move into those houses that there is no parking outside."***

The Cross City Route began as a temporary 'pop-up' cycle route introduced in March 2021 along key east-west corridors through Cardiff city centre. Constructed using bolt-down kerbs and traffic wands, the interim infrastructure allowed Cardiff Council to respond quickly to changing travel patterns and growing demand for safe cycling during the COVID-19 pandemic. The initial phase connected Cathedral Road to Dumfries Place. This was extended soon after with 'pop-up' routes to Wellington Street and on Newport

Road towards Broadway, providing much better connections for inner city residential areas. Routes were designed for extension further west and east as part of a wider programme of cycleways across strategic routes in the city.

Reduced public transport capacity and increased interest in active travel created a need for alternative, socially distanced travel options. Temporary cycleways enabled more everyday journeys by bike while improving safety for new and less confident cyclists and were integrated with other active travel measures and park-and-pedal sites to broaden commuter options. Public statements at the time emphasised the ambition to develop an integrated cycleway network connecting key destinations and neighbourhoods while making cycling safer and more accessible.

By January 2022, the Cross City Route was transitioning from a temporary intervention to the beginnings of the planned permanent east-west route which forms part of the Cardiff to Newport sustainable transport corridor. The city centre now has a cycle path separate from traffic along its main throughfare, Castle Street, and this two-way cycle path provides the link to completed and proposed parts of the planned network of six key routes to and from the city centre.

Previously to cycle from one side of the city to another it was necessary to take an indirect and circuitous route using back streets, crossing main roads and through parks, or to mix with heavy traffic along Castle Street. Positioning cycle paths along main roads rather than through parks increases awareness of the feasibility of cycling in the city.

Connecting key destinations

The cycle routes focused on in this case study form crucial links to well-used destinations in the city.

Cycleway 1 connects the city and civic centres with the University, the Sherman Theatre, passes through residential areas of Cathays and Heath with their schools, shops and library to the University Hospital of Wales.

The **Cross City Route** provides the hub from which the main six-route network will start and end. It is the beginning of Cycleway 2 towards the east which connects to Queens Street station, Cardiff Royal Infirmary, the Civic Centre and schools along Newport Road. It is possible to reach Cardiff Central Station and connect to the broader cycling network, through Sophia Gardens and the Taff Trail, a long-distance pedestrian and cycling corridor along the River Taff.

By providing safer, more accessible travel options for commuters, families, and young cyclists, the cycleway network supports council priorities to link the city's 130 schools to the active travel network.

Ongoing improvements

Further improvements are planned to complete the Cross City Route. The Castle Street section of the route is currently being made permanent, with works starting recently on site. A lot of work has been invested in making the existing bus stops safer for all users as part of a lessons-learnt approach and through extensive engagement with user groups.

As part of Phase 1a of the Cardiff to Newport Sustainable Transport Corridor, the 'pop-up' lane on Boulevard de Nantes leading through to West Grove on Newport Road will be moved to the opposite side of the road to make it more continuous for users.

Works start in January 2027 on this first phase of the route, where it will also incorporate bus stops. These lessons learnt and strategies aim to manage the mix of bus passengers, cyclists and pedestrians to improve the safety and public perception of the route.

Meanwhile, work has continued on other parts of network across Cardiff. Protected cycle paths on Tyndall Street now provide a largely traffic-free route from the east of Cardiff to Cardiff Bay. Queens Street train station has a two-way cycle route which links up with Cycleway 2 and the Cross City Route. While there are gaps in these routes, they should have the same potential as the now completed Cycleway 1 and reflect the same approach of building sections of key routes as resources allow.

Key outcomes

Modal shift and cycling uptake

Cardiff is still on a journey towards its active travel goals, but since their introduction, the cycleways have been associated with measurable increases in cycling activity along core routes. Currently, around 15% of Cardiff residents cycle at least once a week, but 47% of residents would like to cycle more (Walk Wheel Cycle Trust, 2025).

The timing of the Cross City Route's introduction during the COVID-19 pandemic influenced usage patterns. Lockdowns and reduced public transport capacity encouraged more local and leisure cycling, making the pop-up route immediately visible and accessible to residents. Although hybrid working reduced some commuting journeys, the infrastructure provided a safe and

attractive alternative for essential trips and everyday travel, particularly along busy city centre routes.

Camera counter data collected by Cardiff Council shows a substantial growth in average 12-hour daily cycle flows in 2024 compared with pre-COVID-19 levels in 2019. Recorded increases in cycling include +50% on Castle Street, +53% on Cowbridge Road East, +56% on Tyndall Street and +72% on Newport Road (Cardiff Council, 2024a).

This data demonstrates that infrastructure in key locations makes the difference. By building on usage with incremental improvements, more people are able to make their journeys quickly, safely and comfortably by bike.

Improved safety

Good design, including dedicated space for cyclists and separate signal stages at junctions, contributes to a safer environment for riders, particularly new and less confident cyclists during the pandemic period (Cardiff Council, 2021). Cyclists using the route have reported feeling ***"much safer going that route now"*** compared with previous conditions, describing the separated lanes as an improvement that makes journeys quicker and more pleasant (The Cardiffian, 2022).

> ***"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, resident)

Citywide survey data from Cardiff's Annual Transport Survey (Cardiff Council. (2024b) further indicates improvements in perceptions of cycling safety and infrastructure satisfaction between 2019 and 2023. User satisfaction with cycle lanes increased by 8%, while the proportion of residents rating cycling as "safe" rose by 4% and "somewhat safe" by 8% over the same period. Although these figures are not route-specific, they provide valuable context, showing that the cross-city cycleway forms part of a broader trend in Cardiff where high-quality cycling infrastructure can enhance perceived safety and encourage active travel.

Improved public support

As new connections continue to form in the growing cycle network, it has become more convenient and appealing to use. Cllr Sarah Merry described how over time, support for the new routes has increased.

"A lot of people like the look of the sustainable drainage that was introduced as part of the cycle scheme, as it does help lift what was a street with very little greenery.

Where concerns have been raised, if at all possible we try and work with people to find a solution. As the network expands, using it to move around the city becomes more popular and it is a very viable option for children to get to school which is lovely to see."

Key takeaway

Developing a coherent network takes time, and it's important to communicate the overall vision. Creating routes in sections and building easier parts first can enable progress to continue. Temporary measures and employing a test and learn approach planning allows for incremental improvements and ambitious plans to move forwards.

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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.

Executive summary

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. The park forms part of National Cycle Network Route 55, connecting it to regional destinations such as Preston and surrounding communities. Increasing visitor numbers had led to path erosion, drainage issues, as well as barriers to accessibility, particularly for disabled people.

By 2023, sections of the trail network were no longer fit for purpose, prompting a major path and cycling infrastructure improvement programme

The improvements modernised the park's paths to create a safe, inclusive, and sustainable network for walking, wheeling and cycling. The upgrades enhanced the park's role as a recreational cycling destination, improved connections to wider active travel routes, and ensured that people of all abilities can enjoy the park year-round.

Key outcomes include:

- **Evidence of increased cycling:** Strava Metro data[1] 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 2022.
- **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.
- **Improved safety:** Traffic-free, well-drained routes reduce hazards and support year-round use.
- **Environmental benefits:** Erosion control, habitat protection, and wildflower meadows enhance biodiversity.

Background and delivery

Cuerden Valley Park was developed from former estate and agricultural land into a major green space attracting over 300,000 visitors annually as a regional destination for walking, cycling, and family recreation (Cuerden Valley Park Trust, 2021). Over time, this popularity placed increasing pressure on the park's infrastructure, particularly its path network. Many routes became degraded due to erosion, poor drainage, and heavy use, while others were unsuitable for inclusive access due to steep gradients and narrow widths. These issues limited the usability of the park for a diverse range of visitors, including cyclists, pedestrians, and particularly for disabled users.

In response, early proposals highlighted the importance of upgrading routes to support year-round use while reducing environmental damage caused by informal path widening and surface runoff. As a result, the programme was conceived not simply as maintenance, but as a strategic upgrade of the park's infrastructure to meet modern standards of accessibility, sustainability, and recreation.

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

Strategic context

The cycling development programme at Cuerden Valley Park is strongly embedded within regional policy frameworks promoting active travel and environmental sustainability. The Lancashire Active Travel Strategy (Lancashire County Council, 2018) emphasised the promotion of walking and cycling across the county, advocating for safe, accessible, and high-quality infrastructure to encourage sustainable travel choices. The Central Lancashire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (Lancashire County Council, 2023) identified priority corridors and locations for cycling and walking investment and highlighted key sites for multi-use greenway improvements. Cuerden Valley Park was recognised as a strategic recreational and commuter link, directly connecting to National Cycle Network Route 55, and positioned to support wider regional cycling networks.

Complementing these regional plans, the Lancashire Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2015-2025 set out priorities for managing and improving the public rights of way network to provide better provision for walkers, cyclists, equestrians, and disabled people (Lancashire County Council and partners, 2015).

Together, these documents provided a coherent policy framework for investment, guiding the delivery of path upgrades that improved accessibility, connectivity, and the environmental quality of the park. The delivery of the programme was led by the Cuerden Valley Park Trust, with technical design and planning support provided by the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust, a charity providing expertise in sustainable access and inclusive green space projects. The programme had a total cost of approximately £305,000. It was delivered through contributions from Lancashire County Council, which provided support through its public rights of way and public health budgets, and the national walking, wheeling, and cycling charity Sustrans, which contributed funding to support accessibility improvements on the section of the National Cycle Network that runs through the park.

Project delivery

The scheme focused on upgrading key routes through the construction of 2.5-metre-wide multi-user paths, resurfacing existing trails, and improving gradients to ensure accessibility for cyclists, pedestrians, and disabled people, including mobility aid users. Additional infrastructure, including a new footbridge, seating, and access points, enhanced connectivity and user experience across the park. Other mobility-focused modifications include redesigning the entrances to meet accessibility standards.

A further feature of the delivery process was the integration of environmental considerations into design and construction. Routes were carefully planned to

minimise disruption to sensitive habitats, supported by ecological assessments and consultation with relevant agencies. Measures such as wildflower meadow restoration and improved drainage systems were incorporated to reduce erosion and enhance biodiversity. This demonstrates a shift from traditional path maintenance towards a more sustainable, landscape-led approach to infrastructure delivery.

The implementation process involved technical planning, including flood risk assessments and stakeholder engagement, ensuring compliance with environmental regulations and alignment with community needs. As a result, the project successfully delivered a durable, inclusive, and environmentally sensitive network of cycling and walking routes, reflecting best practice in contemporary green infrastructure development.

Key outcomes

Improved inclusivity and accessibility

The construction of 2.5-metre-wide multi-user paths, gentler gradients of approximately 1:12, and redesigned park entrances have enabled safe, year-round cycling for riders of all abilities, including families, beginners, and disabled users. This ensures a more inclusive cycling experience across the park and enables a wider range of people to be able to use it for both recreation and for active travel. The Chief Executive of Cuerden Valley Park Trust described the new infrastructure as ***"a fantastic addition to the park – and the perfect example of our ambition to become one of the most accessible green spaces in the Northwest"*** emphasising the project's positive impact on accessibility for cyclists and other users (Andrew Suter, Chief Executive, Cuerden Valley Park Trust, quoted in Lancashire Evening Post, 2023)

A local resident, Laura Pringle, was previously unable to cycle through the park with her recumbent trike. Laura described how the developments have enabled her to access the park:

> ***"The Park changed the access barriers which has allowed easy access for all types of cycles, trikes, wheelchairs, buggies, cargo bikes etc. I was unable to access the Park with my recumbent trike but now I can sail through happily, which is brilliant – as the alternative is a very busy section of urban A6 trunk road and a dangerous motorway junction crossing."***

Laura's story demonstrates how the removal of physical access barriers has directly enabled cycling for users who were previously excluded, while also providing a safer alternative to nearby high-traffic routes.

Increased cycling activity

By providing high-quality, accessible cycling routes, the park now supports increased cycling participation. The high-quality infrastructure with the use of long-lasting surfacing materials is designed for long-term and high-volume cycling use. With the park attracting over 300,000 visitors annually prior to development (Cuerden Valley Park Trust, 2021), the upgraded paths can now withstand higher volumes of cycling and multi-use activity, supporting the park's role as a recreational and commuting cycling destination.

Strava Metro data[2] for a section of path alongside the River Lostock in the centre of Cuerden Valley Park (Edge UID 534092201) was analysed using four years of monthly data from January 2022 to December 2025. This period covers approximately 18 months before the park improvements and approximately 30 months afterwards. While it should be noted that the dataset only captures journeys made by Strava users with public profiles, it provides a useful indication of cycling activity trends.

The analysis shows a clear increase in cycling activity from 2023 onwards, with monthly trip counts consistently higher in 2023-2025 than in 2022, suggesting increased use following the park improvements. Although there was a slight decline in 2025 compared with 2024, usage remained above 2022 levels. Activity peaks during the summer months (typically 430–490 trips per month), while winter months record the lowest usage. May is consistently the busiest month, rising from 375 trips in May 2022 to a peak of 575 in May 2024 (an increase of 53%) before remaining high at 505 trips in May 2025. The data also indicates that most recorded trips were for leisure (76%), with weekends being the busiest days (Source: Strava Metro, January 2022-December 2025).

There are many comments which highlight the improved park user experience. For example, ***"I went back to the beautiful Cuerden Valley Park – here's why it's better than ever … It's accessible, interesting, beautiful and makes for a great little walk"*** (Lancashire Evening Post, 2025).

Laura Pringle has also noticed the increase in visitors:

> ***"On a Saturday and a Sunday, there are loads of people walking their dogs, taking the kids down. The kids are on their bikes, on their scooters. There are families, groups of cyclists and people out with their boyfriends and girlfriends and just enjoying it. It's a very popular place, especially on a sunny Sunday afternoon."***

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

User feedback such as this highlights the improvements not only in infrastructure but also in the overall visitor experience, which is a key factor influencing route choice and repeat use.

Cuerden Valley Park connects into regional cycling routes. As part of the National Cycle Network Route 55, it links to wider Lancashire and Greater Manchester routes. It provides traffic-free riding along the River Lostock for several miles, and connects to nearby areas like Chorley, Preston, and Buckshaw Village via off-road paths. The project therefore strengthened connections to surrounding communities and contributes to broader network goals.

Rosslyn Colderley, Director of Sustrans in the North, stated:

> ***"As well as being a fantastic local park, Cuerden is part of the popular Route 55 on the National Cycle Network … We're committed to working with local authorities across the UK to enhance the network and create more traffic-free paths that all abilities can access."***
>
> (Quoted in Lancashire Evening Post, 2023)

This integration with wider cycling networks makes the park attractive not just for leisure rides, but also for commuting and longer-distance cycling.

Improved safety for cyclists

The scheme delivered significant safety and environmental improvements by addressing the underlying causes of path degradation. By reducing erosion and surface runoff, the upgraded routes have improved soil stability and protected surrounding habitats from further damage. Well-drained, durable path surfaces have reduced hazards such as standing water, uneven terrain, and muddy sections, supporting safer year-round cycling conditions. In addition, the provision of traffic-free routes within the park removes interaction with motor vehicles, significantly improving safety for cyclists, particularly less confident users and families.

> ***"From a safety and an enjoyment point of view, it's an easy choice. You can go on a cycle path right next to a big main road with all the traffic whizzing past, or you can cycle through the Cuerden valley and hear birds and look at the trees and hear the wind and things like that."***
>
> (Laura, resident)

Accessibility improvements, including gentler gradients and improved path design, further enhance safety and usability by reducing physical strain and risk on previously steep or difficult sections.

Key takeaway

The path and cycling upgrades at Cuerden Valley Park have transformed the park into a fully accessible and inclusive space, supporting increased cycling activity and enabling people of all abilities to enjoy safe, year-round cycling. The project demonstrates how inclusive design can expand access to active travel, recreation, and natural spaces whilst protecting the environment.

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School Streets Hackney – London

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

Executive summary

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. Implemented by the London Borough of Hackney Council, 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 pupils (Department for Transport, 2024; Welsh Government, 2025).

By creating safer, quieter environments around schools, the initiative has been accepted by the community. School Streets contribute to increases in walking and cycling among pupils and families, reductions in motor traffic, and improved local air quality.

Key impacts:

- **Increased cycling:** Cycling trips to school increased by 51%.
- **Increased active travel:** Walking and cycling across the borough increased from 61% to 69%.
- **Traffic reduction:** Vehicle volumes outside schools fell by approximately 68% during morning and afternoon drop-off periods.
- **Reduced emissions:** Tailpipe emissions decreased by up to 74% at some sites.
- **Strong public support:** Around 70% of Hackney residents supported making School Streets permanent.

Background and delivery

Strategic context

The School Streets concept aligns with broader policy objectives across Transport for London and the UK Department for Transport aimed at increasing active travel and improving urban air quality. In London, these objectives are embedded within the Healthy Streets approach, which promotes streets that are safe, accessible, and attractive for walking and cycling.

At the national level, School Streets support the Gear Change strategy (Department for Transport, 2020), which prioritised walking and cycling for short journeys, particularly for children. The programme also contributes to Mayor of London transport targets, including reducing nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) concentrations near schools and increasing modal share of walking and cycling.

Hackney is widely recognised as a leading London borough in promoting sustainable transport and active travel, and has historically pursued ambitious transport policies, including extensive cycling infrastructure, traffic reduction measures and sustainable travel initiatives. These priorities are set out in the borough's Transport Strategy 2015–2025 (Hackney Council, 2015) and Local Implementation Plan (Hackney Council, 2023) which emphasise improving conditions for walking and cycling, reducing traffic and air pollution, and creating safer streets.

Cycling levels in the borough have historically been among the highest in London, with cycling accounting for around 7–8% of trips and approximately 15% of residents cycling to work (Transport for London, 2019; Transport for London, 2024). Overall, around 87% of journeys made by Hackney residents are

undertaken by sustainable modes including walking, cycling, and public transport, while car ownership is low compared with other parts of the UK (Transport for London, 2019). These characteristics reflect long-term investment in cycling infrastructure, low-traffic neighbourhoods, street redesign measures and public transport aimed at reducing reliance on private vehicles.

Within this broader context of sustainable transport policy and high levels of active travel, School Streets were introduced as a targeted intervention to improve safety, reduce congestion and support active travel on the school journey. School Streets are not only a London or UK initiative but part of a growing wave of urban mobility interventions internationally, recognised for improving safety, reducing emissions, and fostering active school travel (Urban Mobility Observatory, 2025).

Delivery mechanisms

The School Streets scheme operates during morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up periods, typically covering 30–60 minutes. During these times, motor vehicles are prohibited from entering designated streets unless they hold a valid exemption permit. Key delivery mechanisms include:

- **Timed restrictions:** Coordinated with each school's timetable to minimise disruption.
- **Permit exemptions:** Residents, delivery vehicles with prior approval, blue badge holders, and emergency services retain access. Schools can request temporary exemptions for special deliveries or maintenance.
- **Enforcement technology:** ANPR cameras automatically record and issue penalty notices to non-compliant vehicles, while council staff monitor compliance and manage complaints.
- **Complementary measures:** Widened pavements, improved crossings, cycle parking, and play-friendly street designs enhance both safety and the attractiveness of walking and cycling. Temporary street play zones encourage social interaction during restriction periods.
- **Communication:** Schools and Hackney Council communicate restrictions through newsletters, social media, and on-street signage to ensure parents and residents are aware of operational hours and exemptions.

Programme development

Hackney's first School Streets were developed at St John the Baptist Primary School, Gayhurst Community School, Millfields Community School, and Oldhill

Community School as pilot projects. Following positive feedback from parents, schools, and residents, the council expanded the programme rapidly.

Key aspects of programme development included:

- **Pilot testing:** Initial trials allowed Hackney Council to refine operational procedures, assess compliance, and measure community response.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** Schools, parents, residents, and local businesses were consulted to address concerns about traffic displacement, access, and enforcement.
- **Governance and roles:** Hackney Council's Transport and Public Realm teams oversaw programme design, implementation, and evaluation. Schools provide operational support by communicating with parents and supervising pupils, while Transport for London and the Department for Transport provide guidance, evaluation frameworks, and funding support.
- **Funding:** Pilot schemes were funded through Hackney's Local Implementation Plan grants from Transport for London, while expansion relied on Department for Transport Active Travel Fund allocations, covering signage, ANPR enforcement, and complementary infrastructure improvements.

Early pilot schemes involved around 30 School Streets, serving approximately 13,000 children, and informed the expansion strategy through lessons learned in community engagement, operational design, and enforcement practices (Hackney Council, 2022). By the early 2020s, Hackney had implemented School Streets outside most of its primary schools, with ongoing plans to assess all remaining schools for potential expansion.

Key outcomes

Active travel and behaviour change

Active travel benefits from School Streets are emphasised by transport practitioners, who note that such schemes can help tackle childhood inactivity by embedding walking and cycling into daily routines (Walk Wheel Cycle Trust, 2025).

The Hackney School Streets programme has led to measurable changes in travel behaviour among pupils and families. Following the rollout of more than 30 School Streets between 2020 and 2021, the proportion of pupils walking or cycling to school across the borough increased from 61% to 69% (Department

for Transport, 2024). During this period, the number of children walking to school increased by 30%, while the number cycling increased by 51%, indicating a substantial shift toward more active modes of travel.

Growing academic evidence supports the observed travel behaviour changes in Hackney's School Streets. A controlled natural experimental study (Patterson et al., 2026) of 498 primary schools in England and Scotland found that traffic restriction schemes at school gates were associated with an average 5.9% increase in active travel (walking, cycling, scooting) and a 5.3% reduction in private motorised travel compared with matched control schools, with consistent patterns across regions and socioeconomic groups. The experience in Hackney shows a significantly larger improvement than this study average and strengthens the case that School Streets can causally encourage healthier travel behaviours among children.

Environmental benefits

School Streets have also delivered significant reductions in motor traffic around participating schools. On average, traffic levels outside Hackney schools with School Street schemes have fallen by approximately 68% during morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up periods (Department for Transport, 2024).

Reductions in vehicle movements have contributed to improvements in local environmental conditions. Evaluations of Hackney's School Streets pilots indicate that the schemes have resulted in substantial reductions in tailpipe emissions, estimated at around 74% at some sites, helping to improve air quality around school gates (CIHT, 2022).

Hackney's experience is consistent with findings from across London. Studies using the Breathe London air quality sensor network show that School Streets reduce nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) concentrations near school gates by up to 23% during morning drop-off periods, directly lowering children's exposure to harmful vehicle emissions (Greater London Authority, 2021). Across the capital, the school run accounts for around one quarter of weekday morning traffic, meaning that interventions targeting school streets can have a significant impact on local air quality (Greater London Authority, 2021). With the programme expanding across London, it was estimated in 2022 that over 260,000 children were benefiting from cleaner air around their schools as a result (Greater London Authority, 2022).

Further academic evidence supports Hackney's environmental outcomes. Hopkinson et al. (2020) found that School Streets significantly reduce children's exposure to air pollution and road danger during school travel periods, providing strong public health justification for these interventions. Broader research also suggests that interventions promoting active travel and reducing traffic can

have positive health impacts for children, including increased physical activity and lower exposure to pollutants, which may indirectly support children's overall health and wellbeing (Aldred et al., 2024).

School level examples of impact

Evidence from individual School Streets pilots in Hackney demonstrates how the programme has influenced travel behaviour and the street environment at specific schools (Hackney Council, 2019).

Gayhurst Community School

The School Street at Gayhurst Community School was introduced in January 2018. Prior to the scheme, there were already relatively high numbers of pupils walking or cycling to school, but staff and parents reported concerns around congestion and unsafe driving behaviour outside the school gate.

Evaluation surveys conducted before and after implementation showed a substantial increase in cycling to school. The proportion of pupils travelling by bicycle increased from 19.7% before the scheme to 28.6% afterwards, representing a 45% increase.

Walking remained the most common travel mode, although its share declined slightly from 70.7% to 62.6%, reflecting some pupils switching from walking to cycling rather than travelling by car. Overall, the proportion of pupils using active travel modes (walking and cycling combined) increased from 76.5% to 86.1%.

The scheme also resulted in a significant reduction in motor traffic outside the school. Traffic volumes on Gayhurst Road during school opening and closing periods fell by approximately 79%, contributing to a safer and quieter street environment for pupils and parents (Hackney Council, 2019).

Millfields Community School

Similar impacts were observed at other early pilot schools. At Millfields Community School, safety concerns had been raised about heavy traffic and illegal parking near the junction of Rushmore Road and Hilsea Street, where the school entrance is located.

Following implementation of the School Street, traffic volumes during the operational periods fell substantially. At the junction of Hilsea Street and Rushmore Road, traffic declined by approximately 70%, while at the nearby Elmcroft Street/Rushmore Road junction traffic fell by around 78%. This equates to around 158 fewer vehicles passing the Hilsea Street junction and 127 fewer vehicles at the Elmcroft Street junction during peak drop-off and pick-up periods.

Travel surveys also showed a shift toward active travel. Walking and cycling combined increased from around 75% of journeys before the scheme to approximately 86% afterwards, while the proportion of pupils travelling by car fell from around 11% to 8%.

Early pilot schools and community feedback
Across the other early pilot schools, including St John the Baptist Primary School and Oldhill Community School, evaluations consistently identified similar reductions in motor traffic and increases in active travel. These results helped demonstrate the effectiveness of the School Streets model and supported Hackney's decision to expand the programme to additional schools.

In addition to the measurable travel and traffic impacts, qualitative feedback from parents, school staff, and residents suggested that School Streets created calmer and safer environments around school gates, with reduced congestion and fewer conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists, and motor vehicles during school travel periods (Hackney Citizen, 2018). Broader survey evidence also indicated strong public support for the schemes, with a poll finding that around 70% of Hackney residents supported making School Streets permanent (Department for Transport, 2024). In the second edition of Hackney's School Streets Toolkit (Hackney Council, 2021), Abigail Hopper, Headteacher at Nightingale Primary School, highlighted how quickly habits can change:

> ***"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!"***

Key takeaway

Hackney's School Streets programme demonstrates how restricting traffic outside schools can reduce congestion, improve safety, increase active travel among pupils, and contribute to improved air quality.

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Image by Cornwall Council

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.

Executive summary

The Saints Trails project is a multi-route active travel initiative developed by Cornwall Council 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 project 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 the scheme 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.

Early evidence indicates strong use and positive reception. An independent evaluation by PFA Research Ltd (2023) found high levels of satisfaction, with

users citing increased safety, health and wellbeing benefits, and enjoyment of the city and countryside.

Key impacts of the project include:

- **Active travel:** High uptake on the Saints Trails by walkers, cyclists, and equestrian users: 46% of users travel at least weekly.
- **Connectivity:** Continuous, traffic-free routes and an essential bridge across the A30 trunk road.
- **Safety:** Reduced risk on busy roads and at the A30 junction.
- **Health and wellbeing:** 64% of users report improved health outcomes.
- **Environmental benefits:** Chiverton Bridge achieved a BREEAM Excellent rating, 30% lower embodied CO_2, and 220% biodiversity net gain.
- **Recognition:** The Perranporth–Goonhavern section won Best Civil Engineering Project under £10 million (ICE Southwest Awards 2024).

Background and delivery

Strategic context and campaigning

The Saints Trails project was developed by Cornwall Council to strengthen active travel infrastructure across mid-Cornwall, addressing high levels of car dependency and the severance effects of strategic corridors such as the A30. The scheme aligns with regional objectives to increase sustainable commuting, improve public health and wellbeing, reduce carbon emissions, and enhance economic connectivity between communities. For example, the Cornwall Transport Plan (Cornwall Council, 2022) set out a vision for a transport system that is reliable, safe, inclusive and carbon neutral, encouraging greater use of low-impact travel modes such as walking and cycling. Similarly, the Cornwall Council Climate Change Action Plan (Cornwall Council, 2019) identified the need for a significant shift towards public transport and active travel to meet the council's target of becoming carbon neutral by 2030. At a more local level, the scheme supports the objectives of the Truro Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (Cornwall Council, 2020), which aims to make walking and cycling the preferred modes for shorter journeys within the area.

Community advocacy played an important role in shaping the Saints Trails project, particularly the inclusion of the A30 crossing at Chiverton Cross. Truro Cycling Campaign, established in 2017, sought to promote safer cycling infrastructure between St Agnes and Truro through public engagement and

consultation responses. Their efforts, including highlighting safety concerns at the A30 junction and the lack of safe routes along the corridor, helped demonstrate strong local demand for improved active travel infrastructure and were influential in securing funding for both the Chiverton Bridge and the wider trail network (Cycling UK, 2020; Truro Cycling Campaign, 2022; 2025).

Funding and delivery

Originally planned as a four-route network spanning approximately 30 km, the project was scaled back due to funding limitations, land acquisition complexities, and deliverability constraints. The final scheme focuses on two primary corridors – Perranporth to Goonhavern and St Agnes to Truro (via Chiverton and Threemilestone) – providing about 13 km of predominantly off-road multi-user trails suitable for pedestrians, cyclists, and equestrian users. The design prioritised off-road alignments where feasible, accessibility for all users, durable surfacing, and environmental mitigation measures, including habitat assessments and ecological protections during planning and construction. Delivered in partnership with National Highways and constructed by Costain, the project was funded through a combination of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), National Highways designated funds, and Cornwall Council contributions, with the total project budget amounting to £20.35 million (Cornwall Council, 2023).

Chiverton Bridge

A defining component of the scheme is the Chiverton Bridge, a 48-metre traffic-free crossing over the A30 at Chiverton Cross, opened in April 2024. The A30 has historically acted as a significant physical and psychological barrier to non-motorised travel in mid-Cornwall. The bridge provides a continuous, safe crossing for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrian users, enabling functional connectivity between the northern (St Agnes) and southern (Truro/Threemilestone) sections of the corridor. Delivered in coordination with the A30 upgrade works, the bridge represents a strategically significant intervention in overcoming trunk road severance. The steel-frame design references Cornwall's industrial and mining heritage, incorporating elements inspired by historic engine houses.

Key outcomes

Early use and user perceptions

Although systematic quantitative monitoring data has not yet been published, early anecdotal evidence indicates strong uptake and positive public reception of the Saints Trails project. An independent evaluation conducted by PFA Research Ltd (2023) assessed usage and perceptions of the trails (prior to completion of the bridge), providing an early indication of the project's impacts.

The evaluation involved multiple data sources including an online survey completed by 419 local residents. Key findings from the survey include:

- **Awareness and use:** 90% of respondents were aware of the Saints Trails project prior to taking the survey, and 44% had already used the trail. Of those who used the St Agnes–Truro section, 46% reported using it at least once per week.
- **Purpose of use:** The trail is primarily used for leisure, but 24% of users also reported commuting to work along the route. Among respondents who had not yet used the trail, 79% stated they would "definitely" or were "fairly likely" to use it in the future.
- **Perceived benefits:** The most commonly reported benefit was feeling safer when walking or cycling (75%), followed by improvements to health and wellbeing (64%) and enjoyment of the city and countryside (56%).

These early results suggested that the Saints Trails project was already, prior to full completion and the opening of the bridge, contributing to increased active travel, supporting community health and wellbeing, and providing safer, more enjoyable routes for pedestrians and cyclists.

Improved connectivity

A principal outcome of the scheme is the improved connectivity through provision of safer, traffic free alternatives to busy rural roads and dangerous junctions, particularly across the A30 at Chiverton. The completion of the Chiverton Bridge established, for the first time, a continuous traffic-free link between St Agnes and the Truro/Threemilestone area. Enhanced safety for active travel users was a core objective of the project and a major driver of community support. Truro Cycling Campaign played a significant role in shaping local awareness and demand for safer routes. The group's campaigning emphasised that without traffic free routes and protected crossings such as the Chiverton Bridge, many residents did not feel confident walking or cycling for commuting or local trips (Truro Cycling Campaign, 2025). Such safety focused community advocacy not only influenced project design but also helped secure funding commitments that were critical to delivering a safer active travel network.

Sarah Wetherill from the group said:

> ***"The St Agnes to Truro Saints Trail represents a big step forward for inter-settlement cycling, enabling a range of ages to cycle from St Agnes to Truro. Count data from sensors on the bridge are already showing healthy levels of use. Its popularity is also evident through the number of local people using the St Agnes village sections for circular rides and walks."***

She also emphasised the importance of continuing to develop the network, as improved cycling connectivity will further boost use of the existing Saints Trails routes.

The PFA Research (2023) survey found that the vast majority of all respondents (84%) believe that the Saints Trail project will make a positive impact to the St Agnes and Truro area. 18% of respondents stated that they own or run a business and they agreed that the Saints Trail would provide benefits such as employees can commute in a more sustainable way, employees can use the trail at lunchtime to "recharge", employees/visitors have better access to the train station and employees/visitors want to come to Truro.

Environmental benefits

The Saints Trails project has delivered significant environmental and sustainability outcomes, particularly through the design and construction of the Chiverton Bridge, which serves as a key infrastructure component of the network. The Chiverton Bridge achieved a Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Methodology (BREEAM) “Excellent” rating, reflecting high standards of sustainable design, material efficiency, and construction management (Costain, 2024). Innovative design and delivery measures reduced the environmental footprint of the project, with an estimated 30% reduction in embodied CO_2 emissions compared to the original concept design, equivalent to approximately 200 tonnes of CO_2 (Costain, 2024; World Construction Network, 2024). This reduction was achieved through multiple strategies, including:

- Optimising the steel-frame design to remove 18 tonnes of steel, reducing associated carbon emissions.
- Maximising the use of low-carbon cement and recycled materials.
- Efficient management of excavated materials for reuse on-site, further lowering the embodied carbon of the project.

Ecological considerations were central to the bridge and trail design. Landscaping and habitat creation measures associated with the Chiverton Bridge are forecast to deliver nearly 220% biodiversity net gain compared to the baseline ecological conditions (Costain, 2024). Key interventions include the planting of hedgerows, woodland, and wildflower meadows, designed to support local flora and fauna, enhance ecological connectivity, and contribute to climate resilience.

Beyond direct construction measures, the project demonstrates the potential for active travel infrastructure to contribute to broader sustainability objectives.

By providing a safe, off-road network for walking, cycling, and equestrian users, the Saints Trails project supports modal shift from motorised transport, which in the long term could reduce local traffic emissions. The PFA Research community survey (2023) shows good usage of the trails, and 33% of survey respondents stated that a benefit of the Saints Trail is being able to walk or cycle to work rather than using motorised transport. PFA research reported that there was no conclusive evidence provided yet for decongestion but that it is likely that there will be a carbon reduction due to the increase in commuter use of the trail.

> ***"Cornwall Council is immensely satisfied with the Chiverton Bridge project. Its completion not only exemplifies our commitment to sustainable infrastructure and active travel but also enhances community connectivity in a manner that respects and preserves our rich local heritage. This project has set a new standard for environmental and social responsibility in Cornwall."***
>
> (Vicky Fraser, Service Director for Environment and Connectivity, Cornwall Council, cited by Costain, 2024)

Recognition and awards

The Perranporth to Goonhavern section of the Saints Trails project was winner of the "Best civil engineering project under £10 million" award at the Institution of Civil Engineers Southwest Civil Engineering Awards 2024. The award acknowledged the project's delivery of off-road routes connecting Perranporth and Goonhavern, use of eco-friendly materials and landscaping, and the creation of a multi-user trail that improves accessibility for walkers, cyclists, wheelchair users, pushchairs, and equestrian users.

The Saints Trails are also included as a Case Study in the Active Travel England (2026) Rural Design Guide, reflecting the project's national significance.

Key takeaway

The Saints Trails project highlights how trunk roads like the A30 can limit active travel and demonstrates that well-designed infrastructure such as the Chiverton Bridge enables safe, sustainable journeys while supporting health, wellbeing, and community connectivity.

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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.

Executive summary

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 at a cost of approximately £13.4 million, the scheme was coordinated by Transport for Greater Manchester as part of the Bee Network. 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. Combined with continuous separation, bus stop bypasses, tightened side roads and traffic-calming measures, the scheme creates a seamless, high-quality corridor designed to support safe and inclusive everyday cycling.

In 2024, the cycleway was awarded the best completed scheme at the Walk Ride GM Active Travel Awards, recognised for its seamless protected infrastructure and high-quality junction design. The cycleway was also commended in the Environmental and Sustainability category at the CIHT

(Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation) Northwest Awards 2025, acknowledging its role in supporting sustainable transport, reducing car dependency and improving safety and accessibility for cycling.

Notable impacts of the cycleway include:

- **Transformational growth in cycling:** Cycle trips on the route increased by 62% between 2021 and 2025.
- **Modal shift away from car use:** Residents report switching from car journeys to cycling, with some households reducing car ownership as a result of the protected route.
- **CYCLOPS junctions as a safety benchmark:** The protected signal design enables cyclists to travel in all directions without mixing with motor traffic, improving confidence and setting a model adopted by other UK authorities.
- **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 infrastructure can catalyse social initiatives.
- **Greater inclusion for women and families:** Evidence and user testimony highlight 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.

Background and development

Policy context

The Chorlton Cycleway aligns with several strategic transport and active travel policies at both Manchester city and city-region level. Manchester's City Centre Transport Strategy (developed by Transport for Greater Manchester, Manchester City Council, and Salford City Council, 2021) identifies high-quality cycling infrastructure as essential to achieving long-term transport goals. The strategy

prioritises separated routes into and through the city centre, allowing cyclists to avoid mixing with busy motor traffic.

The cycleway forms part of the Bee Network, an 1,800-mile network of protected cycling and walking routes across Greater Manchester. The network aims to make active travel a viable choice for everyday trips by connecting communities with workplaces, schools, and key destinations, while reducing reliance on private motor vehicles. In 2024, Manchester was crowned the European City of Cycling, an accolade recognising the city's ambition to support cycling across the city.

Development of the cycleway

The Chorlton Cycleway was completed in stages from 2023 and fully linked with city centre infrastructure by 2025. It was delivered at a headline cost of approximately £13.4 million. The scheme was funded through a combination of regional and targeted active travel investment. It benefitted from coordination by Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) as part of the Bee Network, funding through the Greater Manchester Growth Deal, and the Mayor's Cycling and Walking Challenge Fund. Long stretches of the corridor were delivered using bolt-down segregation (surface-mounted elements bolted onto the road rather than built as permanent concrete features). This is a cost-effective method that allowed greater investment to be focused on complex CYCLOPS junctions.

CYCLOPS junctions

Manchester was the first local authority in the UK to deliver a CYCLOPS (Cycle Optimised Protected Signals) junction at Royce Road in 2020 as a pilot scheme (Colas, 2020). This early implementation demonstrated the feasibility of separating cyclists from motor traffic while allowing protected turns and informed the design of junctions integrated into the Chorlton Cycleway. When the Chorlton Cycleway was constructed from 2023 to 2025, multiple CYCLOPS junctions were incorporated at several further key locations.

CYCLOPS junctions allow cyclists to approach from four 'arms' that meet at a roundabout-style cycle track encircling the junction. Signal timings enable cyclists to proceed straight, turn left, or turn right without the risk of vehicles crossing their path. Additional benefits include:

- Signalisation of all cycle and motor traffic conflicts to ensure safety
- Intuitive management of cycle–cycle conflicts without signals
- Simultaneous movement of cyclists and pedestrians during controlled phases
- Shorter pedestrian waiting times at crossings
- Left filtering from the cycle roundabout without signal control

Interviews with local cyclists highlighted positive perceptions of the CYCLOPS junctions:

> ***"The CYCLOPS crossing is really good. It works and it looks really smart. The design looks good visually, and it helps to make the people crossing – both cyclists and pedestrians – feel important. It feels like it was designed for everyone, not just cars."***
>
> (Ella, local resident, uses the cycleway regularly with her children)
>
> ***"It gives you enough time to get across all three crossings whereas before you had to use the pedestrian crossing where you do one crossing, then you'd have to wait and do the other, whereas CYCLOPS are just brilliant."*** (Hilary, nearby resident)

The successful integration of CYCLOPS junctions along the Chorlton Cycleway has influenced adoption by other UK authorities. For example, Bolton opened the UK's second CYCLOPS junction at Newport Street/Trinity Street, while St Helens Borough Council delivered its own at Lea Green, and Warrington and Leicestershire County Councils have since progressed similar schemes in their areas.

Supporting infrastructure

The original scheme delivered a 5 km protected route from the Chester Road roundabout through Brooks Bar, Upper Chorlton Road, and Chorlton town centre. Following completion of complementary infrastructure in the city centre on Deansgate and Whitworth Street West in April 2025, the corridor now stretches 6.5 km uninterrupted from Chorlton to Deansgate. This extension forms part of Manchester City Council's long-term active travel programme.

The cycleway also includes supporting measures to improve safety and usability:

- Cycle bypasses at bus stops
- Tightened side-road junctions to reduce vehicle speeds
- Traffic-calming speed tables at former traffic island locations
- Cycle lanes positioned behind parking bays
- Access to off-street parking
- Parking restrictions to keep cycle lanes clear

Key outcomes

Modal shift and increased cycling uptake

Since the scheme in Chorlton was completed, there has been a marked increase in people walking and cycling along the route. TfGM's (2026) annual report on Active Travel in Greater Manchester reports an increase in people walking, wheeling and cycling in areas where new, safe infrastructure has been completed, ***"…demonstrating how transformational infrastructure is helping more people choose to walk or cycle."***

Use of the Chorlton Cycleway was monitored between June 2021 and September 2025 by VivaCity camera sensors which count cycles, motor vehicles and pedestrians. The data shows that the number of cycle trips on Chorlton Cycleway were 62% higher in 2025 than they were in 2021.

In addition, local celebration events and stakeholder commentary provide qualitative support for the uptake of cycling along the route, and the wide range of users. During a celebratory ride marking project completion, there was a wide range of people using the route, suggesting that the cycleway is attracting a more diverse set of people to cycle, and not just experienced cyclists.

> ***"When the infrastructure is put in place, it can act as the key which unlocks people's ability to get on a bike and choose cycling. We understand that for some people there is a barrier and that's why schemes like these are so valuable. By re-shaping our transport network we are showing that positive interventions do have the power to change people's behaviour."***
>
> (Councillor Tracey Rawlins, quoted by Manchester City Council, 2025)

In a Walk Ride GM case study, Gareth described how he switched from car travel to cycling on the Chorlton Cycleway which significantly reduced travel time and improved his journey experience (Walk Ride GM, 2024). Gareth used to regularly drive a car along the route to take his daughter to nursery and to travel into Manchester city centre. He made the switch to cycling to save time as he was frustrated at being stuck in traffic jams so regularly and saw the cycle route as potentially being a more convenient way to travel. He now cycles on the route for many of the journeys he previously took by car, and his family has reduced from a two car to a one car household. Gareth hadn't cycled since he was a teenager, so having the protected cycle route helped him to feel safe and confident when cycling. He explained, ***"…having the infrastructure just felt like a really easy way to dip my toe in the water. You felt really protected from the roads, it felt like I wasn't suddenly going to be cut up by a car."***

Improved neighbourhood connectivity

Beyond providing a direct and uninterrupted route into the city centre, the cycleway's value also lies in its connectivity. Protected junctions in all directions enable safe school runs, local shopping trips, and access to neighbourhood destinations. The cycleway functions as part of a future joined-up cycling network, rather than an isolated and linear commuter corridor.

Qualitative comments from local cyclists demonstrate how the cycleway has improved local opportunities for cycling.

> ***"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. The car is so dominant in Manchester but 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, uses the cycleway regularly with her children)

Another local resident, Katy, uses the Cycleway regularly with her two children and commented that, although her family had been cycling previously, she had noticed an increase in new people cycling for local trips and leisure, including families.

> ***"We always see neighbours and other families out cycling on the cycleway that we never saw cycling before, people going shopping, into town, just enjoying being out with the family."***

Gareth described how using the cycleway and connected routes had enabled him to better get to know the local area (Walk Ride GM, 2024):

> ***"Riding the bike has really helped me see the city I live in through a different lens. I know new routes to get where I'm going. I feel more connected to the world around me."***

Community engagement and social benefits

The cycleway, with its fully separated tracks and protected junctions, provides an environment where families and children can travel safely to school, shops, and recreational destinations. It has been a catalyst for local community groups and events using the route, for example at Chorlton Park Primary School, a weekly bike train has been running since March 2025. Led by volunteer ride leaders and supported by TfGM, the bike train enables groups of children and parents to cycle safely to school together from multiple start points and, dependent upon the weather, can have anywhere between 30 and 70 participants each time. The routes use part of the Chorlton Cycleway but have

also encouraged cycling on other local routes into school. The bike train was nominated for Community Project of the Year in the 2025 Manchester Sports Awards. The bike train was also awarded funding through Cycling UK's Big Bike Revival programme to run events targeted at parents, including learn to ride and learn to fix events, and this has led to many parents and families being more able to cycle locally outside of school time, including on the Chorlton Cycleway.

Dawn, one of the bike train organisers, said the route has made a big difference.

> ***"Chorlton wasn't really a place that I'd want to cycle with my children before, and now that the infrastructure is there, it feels really safe and we use the bike paths all the time to get around."***

A number of other community cycling projects and initiatives have emerged around the cycleway, illustrating how local groups are using the infrastructure for social, developmental and inclusive cycling activities. The Chorlton Community Cycle Lane Ride brought around 100 riders together in June 2025 to celebrate the new cycleway, with involvement from school pupils, traders and local cycling organisations (MCR Active, 2025). Chorlton Bike Deliveries operates a bike library and bike loan service that encourages residents to use the cycleway.

Improving cycling safety for women

The Walking and Cycling Index for Greater Manchester (Walk Wheel Cycle Trust, 2023) found that, in 2023, 35% of all residents thought that the level of safety for cycling in their local area was good (compared to 34% in 2021). In addition, 41% thought that their local area overall was a good place to cycle (compared to 37% in 2021). Whilst these figures are Greater Manchester-wide and are not specific to those residents local to the Chorlton Cycleway, this overall increase in positive safety perceptions is most likely to be reflected amongst residents in areas local to infrastructure developments.

In particular, there was an increase in the Walking and Cycling Index figures amongst women having positive perceptions of cycling safety, with 35% of women in 2023, compared to 32% in 2021. It is well documented that women are more likely to cite concerns about road danger and the lack of safe cycling infrastructure as a reason not to cycle. Local research found that 68% of women in Greater Manchester said that they avoid walking home alone at night (Shorrocks and Sanders, 2023). Common actions taken due to safety concerns were taking specific routes when travelling alone (41%), avoiding exercise in the evening or at night (38%) and avoiding using transport at certain times (33%). This highlights a broader pattern of safety fears that can influence women's decisions about cycling and travel after dark. Indeed, the research found that barriers to cycling amongst women in Greater Manchester included safety

concerns (32%), speed and volume of traffic (27%) and lack of confidence (27%).

These factors illustrate why high-quality protected cycling infrastructure, like the Chorlton Cycleway, is vital for enabling more women to cycle, as it directly addresses safety and confidence barriers that disproportionately affect women. Broader UK studies find that physically separated cycle lanes make women much more likely to consider cycling, and international comparisons show that protected infrastructure is associated with higher and more gender-balanced cycling participation (Walk Wheel Cycle Trust, 2018).

In the *Moving Up North* podcast episode *Starting a Kidical Mass Revolution & Manchester's Best Cycle Lane* (Walk Ride GM, 2025b), hosts Harry Gray and Will York interview Chorlton Park's Labour Councillor Mandie Shilton-Godwin, about the development and award recognition of the Chorlton Cycleway and discuss its role in reframing the stereotypical idea of who can be a cyclist. Councillor Shilton-Godwin described how important the cycleway, which connects to Chorlton Park Primary school, is for women and children.

> ***"It's just fantastic to see kids using it. When I see people on the bike lane, especially women and children, it's not just about getting men to work and back … but mostly for me it's about enabling your granny, or your grandkids, meaning those people can ride safely on it."***

Similarly, local parents also commented on feeling much more confident about their children cycling safely on the cycleway.

> ***"It feels safer, especially with the kids, in that they are separated and protected [from traffic]. I feel so much confidence myself. If it wasn't there, I'm not sure I would have done half as much cycling with my kids."*** (Female cyclist, uses the cycleway regularly with her children)

Key takeaway

By combining continuous protection with innovative CYCLOPS junction design, the Chorlton Cycleway demonstrates that when cyclists are fully separated from motor traffic, cycling uptake rises sharply, car dependence falls, and whole communities — especially women and children — feel able to travel safely and confidently.

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Common themes and lessons to learn

The case studies provide insights into how to create cycling infrastructure and the benefits of doing so. They cover a wide geographical spread, mix of urban and rural settings and types of intervention. Eight are from England and there is one each from Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Project name	Location	Rural or Urban	Single Route or Network
South City Way	Glasgow	U	R
Polegate to Firle shared-use path,	E. Sussex	R	R
Mini-Holland,	Waltham Forest, London	U	N
A38 'Blue Route'	Birmingham	U	R
Comber Greenway	Belfast	Semi-urban	R
Bradford City Centre Transformation	Bradford	U	N
Cardiff Cycleways	Cardiff	U	N
Cuerden Valley Park	Chorley	Semi-urban	N
School Streets Hackney	Hackney, London	U	N
Saints Trails and Chiverton Bridge	Cornwall	R	R
Chorlton Cycleway,	Manchester	U	R

For the remainder of this report the projects will be referenced by location rather than project name, as above.

Analysis shows a number of common themes from which lessons can be learnt to support the development of future projects.

1. Infrastructure creation attracts cyclists ("build it and they will come")

Theme: Infrastructure consistently unlocks latent demand.

A very consistent result shown in the case studies is that the creation of high-quality cycling infrastructure works, i.e. it increases the number of people cycling along the route, around the network and even in adjacent areas.

Examples:

- **Manchester** - Cycle trips on the Chorlton Cycleway increased by 62% between 2021 and 2025, including among people who hadn't cycled for years.
- **Waltham Forest** – Residents spend around 23–29 minutes more per week cycling compared to control areas.
- **Glasgow** - Cycling volumes along the South City Way rose by up to 65% at peak commuting times and cycles account for 15-20% of all journeys on the Victoria Road section.
- **Birmingham** – The A38 'Blue Route' records an average of 500 cyclists per day – higher than other routes in the area.
- **Belfast** - Cycling grew from 26% of trips in 2003 to 54% by 2015, becoming the dominant mode of travel along the Comber Greenway.
- **Cardiff** – Monitoring indicates significant local increases in cycle flows - up 50–72% on key sections.
- **Hackney** - Cycling trips to school increased by 51%.

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

2. Integration with a wider vision adds coherence

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 in which they are situated, for example, for fitting with strategies for transport, city centres or health.

Examples:

- **Manchester** – The Chorlton Cycleway is part of Greater Manchester's 1,800-mile Bee Network of protected cycle and walking routes and also Manchester's City Centre Transport Strategy.
- **Birmingham** – The route is integral to the Birmingham Cycle Revolution programme and accessed funding from a Local Growth Fund.
- **Bradford** – The major urban regeneration project strategically fitted with the UK City of Culture 2025 designation. It was delivered by the Council and the Combined Authority and funded through the Transforming Cities Fund.

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

3. Strong co-benefits aid buy-in

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

The case studies showed a wide range of benefits in addition to increasing cycling or sustainable transport. Many projects planned for these and made it an additional purpose of the project from the beginning, showing engagement is strongest when the purpose of the scheme includes wider benefits that people want to see. This is especially important for people who don't cycle.

Examples:

- **E. Sussex** – The shared-use path was integrated sensitively into the South Downs and was able to protect existing habitats and enhance biodiversity along the route.
- **Bradford** – The project was characterised by strong economic impacts - increasing city centre footfall by 25% in one year, creating 12,000m^2 greenspace and an estimated £9.8m of social value.
- **Hackney** – Traffic levels dropped by 68% which improved air quality by reducing emissions by 74%. The reported calmer streets had additional health benefits as more children were able to travel actively to school.
- **Cornwall** – Objectives included improving public health and wellbeing, reducing carbon emissions, and enhancing economic connectivity between communities. Delivery met this including a 220% boost for biodiversity.

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. Real-world needs and user experience matters

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

Planning and consultation were both key points to make routes meaningful for people - ensuring they enable real everyday journeys and link people to places they need to go to, like school, work, hospitals and town centres. This is

particularly important for women who make more complex, multi-purpose journeys.

Examples:

- **Bradford** - Connecting seamlessly to the West Bradford Cycle Superhighway and other regional routes, the project links residential areas to the city centre. Cycle parking was installed near major destinations to encourage commuting by bike.
- **Cardiff** – Cycleway 1 was designed to link the city centre with residential areas the University Hospital, schools and transport hubs.
- **Chorley** – A strategic upgrade was conceived early to support year-round use of the routes throughout the park and make important changes to enable access.

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. Continuous, connected routes and networks enable safer journeys

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

A number of the case studies feature relatively long routes with continuous protection along the whole length. These end-to-end corridors linking homes, jobs, schools and city centres allow whole journeys free from fear of having to mingle with traffic.

Examples:

- **Waltham Forest** – Planning emphasised a 'coherent borough-wide network' enabling 'complete journeys' which increased the perception of safety.
- **Manchester** – The cycleway project created a safe uninterrupted 6.5km corridor linking Chorlton to Deansgate in Manchester.
- **E. Sussex** – A 13km traffic-free route now sits alongside the high-speed road and has successfully addressed long-standing safety concerns.

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

6. Physical separation from traffic is critical

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

The case studies feature infrastructure created to the high standards required in official guidance. The key principle is to provide physical separation from traffic and preferably from pedestrians. To make cycling safer and encourage more people to cycle some projects combined infrastructure with other measures to reduce vehicular traffic or make roads quieter.

Examples:

- **Birmingham** – The A38 cycle route is separated from the carriageway and includes a unique section along the wide central reservation. This also keeps the cycle track away from pedestrians.
- **Hackney** - School Streets remove traffic entirely from designated roads around schools at key times of the school day. 50 School Streets in the borough saw a 68% reduction in vehicles at the beginning and end of the school day.
- **Waltham Forest** – The scheme's 'high-dose approach' included Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, pedestrianisation of streets, widened footways and traffic calming measures. After a year, people were 24% more likely to cycle.

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

7. High-quality design at junctions is crucial

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

Many of the projects, especially, in urban areas include multiple features to reduce danger to people cycling. Junctions are areas where different road users can come into conflict so installing safe junctions and crossings should be a priority.

Examples:

- **Manchester** – The Chorlton Cycleway features multiple CYCLOPS (Cycle Optimised Protected Signals) junctions which physically separate cyclists from motor traffic.
- **Glasgow** – Scotland's first protected (Dutch-style) junctions were trialled and installed.
- **Bradford** – Key junctions within the city centre project were redesigned to include cycle-specific signals and bike boxes.

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. Safety and perceived safety drive cycling uptake

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

Several case studies show that when people feel safe, they will cycle and cycle more. It is important to design for those who are not confident cyclists or who don't yet cycle.

Examples:

- **Glasgow** – Real and perceived safety benefits encourage 'new and reluctant' people to cycle. Strong improvements in perceived safety were recorded from those using the route- increasing from 26% to 54%.
- **Birmingham** – As part of the Birmingham Cycle Revolution programme the clear visual identity and separation from traffic aimed to increase safety perception of the route.
- **Belfast** – Perception of safety is also important to increase path use on shared use routes away from traffic. There was overwhelming support (81%) for lighting the urban section of the Comber Greenway and also a majority (58%) for lighting the whole route.
- **Cornwall** – The independent evaluation of local residents found that the greatest benefit to people was feeling safe when walking or cycling (75%).

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 expands participation

Theme: Good infrastructure broadens the appeal of cycling.

By designing to high standards most of the projects will support disabled users and others, including those using adapted cycles. Some have removed physical barriers or addressed the needs of specific groups. Many case studies heard from women who are now cycling more and with their children.

Examples:

- **Chorley** – Wide multi-user paths, re-surfacing and improved gradients mean the paths are much more accessible for disabled people.
- **Manchester** – A local 'bike train' uses the route to enable families and children to cycle to school. A community cycle lane riding group and other community initiatives have begun because of the route.
- **E. Sussex** – Designed to accommodate a wider variety of users including horse riders, people riding adapted cycles and those using mobility aids.

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

10. Early and ongoing engagement improves schemes

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

Many schemes made a point of holding meaningful engagement and involved people early - not just at a formal consultation stage. Successful schemes drew on the opinions and experience of stakeholder groups and communities of interest – not just residents. They can play a critical role in demonstrating demand for new infrastructure, improving designs and building acceptance.

Examples:

- **E. Sussex** – Extensive and early engagement with parish councils, residents, landowners, and environmental organisations informed the design of the infrastructure. This collaborative approach ensured the route reflected the local character of the National Park and responded to community priorities.
- **Birmingham** – Early consultation highlighted strong latent demand for safe, separated cycling infrastructure. Cycle counter data appears on publicly accessible dashboards and on social media to increase transparency.

- **Cornwall** - Community advocacy helped secure and shape the scheme, particularly the inclusion of the Chiverton Bridge. Truro Cycling Campaign highlighted safety concerns at the A30 junction and the lack of safe routes along the corridor and helped demonstrate strong local demand.

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. Community engagement and support evolves over time

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

Some of the projects featured in this report experienced significant opposition at first. However, trust and acceptance grow when councils communicate clearly and consistently, and attitudes shift after people experience changes.

Examples:

- **Waltham Forest** – The Mini-Holland initiative faced initial controversy but later gained strong support
- **Cardiff** – Following opposition to some elements of the plans the Council has listened to concerns and tried to find acceptable solutions.
- **Hackney** – Surveys showed high levels (70%) of public backing for making the School Streets changes permanent.

Lesson: Anticipate 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. A phased and iterative approach improves delivery

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.

Projects with lengthy routes often opened sections when completed which helps people experience change, not just imagine it. Schemes improved where user feedback was actively used and incorporated.

Examples:

- **Cardiff** – The Cross City Route evolved from 'pop-up' lanes as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The route was then made permanent but continues to be developed in response to user feedback.
- **Glasgow** – The South City Way project was guided by collaboration, through early consultation at the design and preparatory stage with ongoing monitoring and stakeholder engagement informing design adjustments. Construction occurred in phases with sections opening as they were completed.
- **Waltham Forest** - Initial delivery included pilots where temporary road closures and modal filters were introduced to test the impacts before permanent implementation.

Lesson: Adopt a "trial first, decide later" delivery approach using infrastructure 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

All 11 of the featured infrastructure projects have been successful in providing safe space for cycling and increasing the numbers of people cycling.

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

In doing so we recommend:

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 in this report demonstrate that building high-quality cycling infrastructure does work – it attracts people who want to cycle. **The evidence is clear that when these high-quality routes are created people will use them and the number of people cycling will increase**. Testimonies from women show they particularly benefit from these schemes, and from projects which enable them to use the new routes. In addition, the case studies show that schemes can be designed to successfully deliver many other benefits to communities, local economies and the environment.

This is not to say that any cycle route will do. That minimalist approach of creating low-quality cycling infrastructure has been tried widely in the past and it has not worked (Pucher et al, 2009). We have seen that successful cycle routes are ones which are designed to a high quality, protect cyclists, take people where they want to go, do not stop and start, and improve the neighbourhoods in which they are located. These successful projects balance a strong vision and steadfast determination to improve transport options with openness to listen to communities.

There also needs to be recognition that building infrastructure alone will not be enough to optimise use of the routes. Greater success can be generated by developing associated projects which reach out into surrounding communities and enable local people to cycle and use the new infrastructure, networks and routes. Creating the much-needed infrastructure won't help those who can't afford a bike or who have never learnt to ride, so associated projects such as cycle training, bike buddy schemes, or bike share programmes are beneficial. A range of measures are needed to bring about a cycling renaissance at the local level and nationally (Pucher and Buhler, 2012; Wardlaw, 2014)

Monitoring data from the case study locations, and other places where infrastructure has been built, must be used to judge success of these interventions rather than national data on the number of people cycling, which is currently very low. The case studies are hotspots of safe cycling in a national road network which remains largely challenging for anyone other than the most experienced cyclist. Whilst it remains important to collect national data, only localised monitoring data collected in places where new cycling infrastructure projects have been completed will truly show the success of individual projects. Politicians should look at the evidence of the success of these projects rather than national cycling data to justify decisions.

The case studies show numerous examples of successful cycling infrastructure schemes across the UK. There is no longer a need only to look to the

Netherlands, Copenhagen or Paris for inspiration – exemplars are located throughout the UK. This report included 11 locations, but other excellent examples of successful projects exist in Edinburgh, Worcester, Leicester and Cambridge. The expertise to deliver these exciting successful projects is also growing.

A new impetus is needed to make transformational change happen across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland - but to ensure this happens the barriers must be addressed and challenged. Lessons from successful projects must also be learnt and disseminated more widely.

Decision-makers need confidence that spending significant sums on new cycling infrastructure schemes will be value for money. But it's not just about figures on spreadsheets, there's a need to win hearts and minds too. Politicians need to see that cycling infrastructure can transform places, look good and be popular with the public.

Creating high-quality cycling infrastructure increases the number of people cycling and brings huge benefits for communities. Seeing is believing, and highlighting the exemplars in these case studies shows what is possible elsewhere in the UK.

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