



Above: Sustrans at work – Ed Plowden was in charge of barrier removal for the charity

Right: The kind of rural cycle route most of us wish there were more of: NCN 7 at Drumochter Pass in the Cairngorms

I have no real answer for why we find ourselves in this situation, other than looking at what happens when the UK tries to deliver transport infrastructure of any kind today. Our previous government thought, for example, that a flagship rail link between England's major cities, HS2, would do fine if it stopped just outside London. We tend to think of transport in silos. We deliver homes that are only accessible by car, without rail links, bus, walking or cycling connections. And we generally fail to properly plan and fund projects long term. It's something this government says it is looking to resolve in its Integrated Transport Strategy – including for cycling. Time will tell how that pans out.

ANSWERS ON A POSTCARD

The solutions are not complicated. Given the funds, the political backing and the working capacity, we could deliver a National Cycle Network worthy of the name within four years. We already have £16bn earmarked for 'low-value' road projects that should be redirected, and a large body – National Highways – with the capacity to deliver cycle routes.

We could meet Sustrans' aim to connect settlements of 10,000 people or more, building new routes beyond the hedgerow of existing roads, and we could fund local authorities to connect those routes to urban networks. We could



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designate some streets as 'through' roads and some as 'access' roads, akin to low traffic neighbourhoods, as the Dutch do.

Following almost a decade of route construction, London cycling trips have increased an impressive 26% since 2019; they're up 6% since 2023 alone. Data already tells us where there's the highest potential for cycle trips, using the Propensity to Cycle Tool, while local authorities' Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans, or LCWIPs, tell us where councils' priority routes would go.

Given less than £20bn, we could deliver enough rural and urban routes to meet the target that half of our walking and cycling trips are made by bike. We just need to get on and do it. ●

Cycling UK's view

Duncan Dollimore, Cycling UK's head of campaigns, writes:

The lack of sufficient, sustained, long-term funding for cycling has held back the development of safe cycling routes across the UK for many years. That's why Cycling UK has long campaigned for governments across the UK to ramp up spending on active travel to at least 10% of the total transport budget. Progress has been patchy. The Scottish government is now proposing cuts to the active travel budget. Cuts to funding for cycling are looking likely in Wales. And in England, funding for the year ahead, though increased, is still below 2022-23 levels, which were cut by 75% in March 2023.

Preventing further cuts and securing increased funding for cycling will be a major part of Cycling UK's campaigning this year. We'll be giving supporters, wherever they live, opportunities to contact their politicians and support our campaigning. You can already check out our cycling budget page (cyclinguk.org/budget-action) and fill in a form there to let your politicians know you want to see increased, long-term funding for cycling.