



Feature

SHOW US THE MONEY

Warm words about cycling from governments aren't enough. It's money that talks. **Duncan Dollimore** explains what Cycling UK is doing to try to secure it

When we're lobbying governments to increase their investment in cycling, we need to be persuasive but we also have to be professional.

I do, though, sometimes hear my inner self screaming at me like Cuba Gooding Jr in the film *Jerry Maguire*. When negotiating for a better deal, his character's approach was to repeat one demand increasingly loudly: "Show me the money!" Officials and politicians often agree with us effusively about the benefits of spending more money on cycling. But actions – and budgets – speak louder than words.

There are things local authorities can do to enable more people to cycle that don't require significant central government funding. It's



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relatively inexpensive to: lower speed limits to 20mph; restrict motor traffic outside schools at certain times; prevent through traffic in residential areas; or provide more cycle parking. Connected networks of protected cycle lanes, although cheap in comparison with road building or other transport infrastructure, cost more. Delivering those networks requires more significant and long-term investment. It's what the Dutch have been doing for decades.

Campaigning for funding for cycling has been a key part of our advocacy work for many years. The headline demand in our manifesto for last year's general election was a commitment to invest in cycling and walking by allocating 10% of total transport budgets to them. With many transport issues being devolved, we have been pressing the governments in all four home nations on this – especially in the last few months.

SCOTLAND

I'm writing this in February, just after the Scottish budget for next year had been passed. In December the Scottish government published a draft budget, proposing to cut the active travel budget by £31m. We've been lobbying politicians ever since, and our supporters in Scotland used our online campaign action to send thousand of emails to their MSPs. Sadly, the proposed cuts have now been confirmed.

It's worth noting that Scotland is still investing more per person than any other nation in the UK, and has significantly increased that investment year on year – until this year. In May 2026 the Holyrood elections present further campaigning opportunities to push for increased investment.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Unlike Scotland, where ongoing progress has been hamstrung by cuts, Northern Ireland has yet to get out of the starting blocks. The 2022 Climate Change Act (NI) looked promising. It imposes a legal commitment on the Department for Infrastructure to develop sectoral plans for transport, with a minimum spend on active travel of 10% of the overall transport budget.