Department for Infrastructure
An Roinn Bonneagair
Depairtment fur Infrastructure
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Everyday Active Travel

The Urban Delivery Plan



October 2026

Ministerial Foreword

There is a clear demand for cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable travel choices. The Programme for Government 2024-2027 recognises the importance of building new foundations for a more productive and prosperous economy, and helping people to lead healthier and greener lives.

In support of this, I am committed to increasing investment in active travel, and this Delivery Plan will play a key role in ensuring that we maximise the benefits of that investment.

Walking, wheeling, and cycling are great ways to incorporate physical activity into our daily lives, and getting out in the open air is good for our general wellbeing too. Active travel can boost local economies by increasing footfall in town centres and can help to reduce our carbon footprint when we choose to leave the car behind. Providing attractive active travel options promotes social equality for those who cannot drive or do not own a car and can also help children and young people gain greater independence in how they travel.

This Plan sets out how we will prioritise and deliver high quality active travel infrastructure in our larger towns and cities to help make walking, wheeling, and cycling the easiest and most enjoyable choice for many of our shorter everyday journeys.

I am also committed to making active travel in our rural towns and villages more attractive and accessible and will ensure a fair allocation of investment in this area.

Public engagement has played a significant role in shaping this Plan. The consultation showed strong support for prioritising connections to schools, town centres, and public transport, as well as clear endorsement of our people centred and safety focused design principles.

Valuable local knowledge gathered as part of the consultation has also helped to shape the routes included in this plan and will help to ensure that the schemes we bring forward for delivery in the coming years meet the needs of local communities.

By investing in cleaner and greener transport options, we can create healthier, safer. and more vibrant communities, where everyone's journey matters.

Achieving this will take time but a good start is half the work, and by getting the infrastructure right and investing appropriately, I believe that we can deliver a better, more sustainable future for all.



Liz Kimmins MLA
Minister for Infrastructure

What is Active Travel?

The Department for Infrastructure defines Active Travel as:

"Travelling by physically active means such as walking, wheeling, or cycling".

Walking and wheeling refers to walking, running, or wheeling unaided, as well as using any kind of mobility aids such as electric wheelchairs, mobility scooters or walking frames. People pushing prams or buggies are also included in this definition, as well as other modes such as scooting, skateboarding, and rollerblading/roller skating.

Cycling refers to users of pedal cycles, but not motorbikes. The definition includes pedal assistance e-cycles and non-standard cycles, such as adapted cycles (cycles or tricycles, specially adapted for use by disabled people), cargo cycles and recumbents.

Active travel infrastructure includes footways, footpaths, cycle tracks, cycle lanes, crossings, junction treatments, and bridges. Greenways and shared use paths, lighting, cycle parking, signage, and wayfinding are also included.

The Benefits of Active Travel

Active travel offers a wide range of benefits that enhance our health, environment, economy, and society.

Health Benefits

Active travel is an easy and effective way to improve physical and mental health. By integrating activities like walking, wheeling, or cycling into their daily routines, people can maintain a healthy weight, boost cardiovascular fitness, and lower the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. Regular physical activity also strengthens muscles and improves joint health.

Beyond physical health, active travel also has a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing. It can reduce stress, anxiety, and depression while improving mood and mental clarity. Walking or cycling to school can enhance concentration and focus for students, which can lead to improved academic performance.

Environmental Benefits

Active travel can play a crucial role in reducing the environmental impact of transport, particularly in our towns and cities. Walking, wheeling, and cycling are all virtually emission free modes of transport that consume little natural resources and can help to reduce dependence on the private car. High quality pedestrian and cycling infrastructure helps to create cleaner and greener places, where traffic congestion and air pollution have less impact on people's lives.

Economic Benefits

Investment in active travel infrastructure can also deliver substantial economic returns. Studies[1] have shown that redesigning urban spaces to be more people centred can lead to increased foot traffic, higher sales for local businesses, and an overall boost to the economy. Walkable, cycle-friendly environments attract more residents, visitors, and developers, making communities more vibrant and commercially successful.

Our road network is operating beyond capacity at certain times of day in many towns and cities. Active travel can provide the means for many more people to make the everyday journeys that are important to them without worrying about traffic congestion or the cost of fuel. If more people make the switch to active travel, we will create a transport network that has greater capacity and is more resilient.

1 Living Streets, The Pedestrian Pound, 3rd edition

Social Benefits

Active travel can play a significant role in promoting social equality and inclusivity. By providing attractive and accessible travel options, we ensure that everyone has the freedom to move around easily and independently, including the significant proportion of the population who cannot drive or do not have access to a car.

Creating public spaces that prioritise human interaction can also help transform our streets into safer, more inclusive places where people feel happy to spend time.

When people feel comfortable spending time in shared places, it promotes social cohesion and makes neighbourhoods feel safer and more welcoming.



Purpose of Everyday Active Travel - The Urban Delivery Plan

One third of journeys taken are less than two miles long, and almost two thirds are less than five miles long[2]. These shorter distances offer a tremendous opportunity for active travel to become a practical and attractive option for many people.

We are committed to developing and maintaining safe and inclusive active travel infrastructure that makes walking, wheeling, and cycling the easiest and most enjoyable choice for shorter everyday journeys.

The Programme for Government Wellbeing Framework lists the percentage of journeys under two miles people choose to make by walking or cycling as one if its Healthier Lives indicators. This percentage has remained stubbornly static over the past number of years, and greater investment will be required if we want to change that.

Section 22 of the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 mandates the development of sectoral plans for transport that set a minimum spend on active travel from the overall transport budgets of 10%.

Meeting this will require a significant increase in investment and we must ensure that we invest wisely to maximise the benefits that can be achieved.

Recent survey results show that active travel makes up around a quarter of all journeys here, most of these are walking journeys[2]. Cycling could replace many more journeys, especially those too long to walk, but only if the infrastructure is safe and attractive. That is why expanding cycling networks is key to increasing active travel overall.

Northern Ireland Changing Gear – A Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland[3] was published in 2015, setting out a three-pillar approach to increasing cycling up to 2040. This Delivery Plan complements the existing Strategic Plan for Greenways and the Belfast Cycling Network Delivery Plan to progress the 'Build' pillar in the Strategy.

This Plan sets out how we will develop, prioritise, and deliver well designed, connected, high quality active travel networks within our larger towns and cities over the next ten years and beyond.



2 Travel Survey Northern Ireland Report 2022 and 2023

3 A bicycle strategy for Northern Ireland

Developing the Network

We need to ensure that investment in active travel brings significant benefit to as many people as possible. If we want to create additional capacity in our transport network and realise the benefits that active travel can bring, our investment needs to enable and encourage people to shift modes of transport from private cars.

The greatest potential for this shift is in urban areas with higher population numbers, and where a variety of key destinations are easily accessible without a car.

Whilst there are generally good pedestrian networks within larger towns and cities, building safe, connected cycling networks will give people the option to travel longer distances actively, safely, and comfortably, making cycling a realistic alternative to driving for many journeys.

Although a key element of this Plan involves the development of connected cycling networks, every scheme designed will also look to improve the pedestrian environment along that route, making sure that our streets are inclusive and accessible to all.

Prioritising key journeys

We developed an assessment framework that allowed us to assess and score potential active travel routes based on several objective criteria.

User needs was a key consideration. We collected information from a range of sources including data on things like population densities and demographics. Another key consideration was the extent to which a route would connect people to existing places of interest, such as schools, leisure facilities, areas of employment and many other local amenities, as well as any potential barriers such as railway lines, rivers, land ownership, and ecological matters.

We also engaged with local communities and key stakeholders, such as councils, active travel advocacy groups, the Inclusive Mobility Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC), and Translink.

This helped us identify three key connection types which we believe offer the greatest value to local communities. Public consultation on the draft Plan has shown strong support for prioritising these connection types and consequently we have placed a particular emphasis on these in our assessment framework.

Connections to local schools

Improving the active travel infrastructure around schools to encourage parents and children to travel actively for the school run can improve safety and bring health benefits for pupils and parents alike. By investing in such infrastructure, and working in partnership with others, we can empower young people to adopt sustainable habits that can last a lifetime.

Connections to public transport

Combining active travel and public transport is a great way for many people to reduce dependence on the private car and reduce their carbon footprint over longer distances.

Connections to town centres

Creating better connections to local centres will make it easier for people to access the amenities they use every day. This can lead to increased footfall, making these local centres more vibrant and commercially attractive.

Maximising opportunities

The consultation also told us that there are many other types of journeys that people value. Examples include journeys to workplaces, leisure and recreational facilities, and healthcare facilities. Recognising the added value they offer, we will look to identify any opportunities to connect to these amenities as we develop the individual schemes within the plan over the coming years.

Delivering the Network

Delivering comprehensive active travel networks in all our towns and cities will take decades, and it may be several years before we see significant increases in active travel journeys at a population level. However, this plan sets out how we intend to develop those networks, realising benefits at a scheme level, and connecting those schemes over time to create a multiplier effect.

We have used our assessment framework, along with views gathered through public consultation, to develop a network of priority routes for delivery over the next 10 years, and future routes for delivery after that. We have also identified routes where the existing active travel infrastructure could be enhanced.

This process has resulted in the active travel network maps for all urban settlements, with the exception of Belfast, where the primary focus for investment is the Belfast Cycling Network Delivery Plan (2022)[4]. For this Plan, we have used the NISRA definition of urban settlements as those with a population of over five thousand[5].

The network maps have been grouped by council area and are provided as appendices to this document. The numbering of the routes on the maps is for illustrative purposes only and does not represent the order in which schemes will be progressed. To make it easier to navigate the network, an interactive map is also available on the Department's website.

We are proposing to phase delivery as set out below:

Priority routes (0 to 10 Years): The priority programme includes over 140 kilometres of active travel corridors across the settlements, **connecting over 280,000 people** to key everyday destinations including **118 schools, 33 town centres and 17 public transport hubs.**

The priority programme represents investment of between £140 million and £280 million over the next decade, based on the current estimated average cost per kilometre of delivering high quality active travel infrastructure.

We believe this is a realistic projection of what can be achieved through this Plan based on future budgets being aligned with our commitment to meet Section 22 of the Climate Change Act by 2030 and continuing at that level beyond 2030.

The pace of delivery will be influenced by several factors, including the availability of future funding. Should funding levels change, we can adapt accordingly, scaling delivery to ensure we make the best possible use of the resources available.

It is important to recognise that an average active travel scheme takes a number of years to deliver from inception to construction, and therefore the delivery of the priority programme will be taken forward in tranches. Future phasing will be informed by a more detailed route assessment of the relative merits of a scheme and engagement at local council level.

Future routes (10+ Years): Looking ahead, the Plan also identifies almost 1,000 kilometres of additional corridors for future delivery beyond the priority programme, providing planners and developers with a long-term vision for more sustainable transport within our towns and cities. Development of these routes over time will deliver an increasingly connected network, allowing active travel to become a serious practical alternative to the private car for many shorter journeys.

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4 Belfast Cycling Network Delivery Plan 2022 – 31

5 NISRA 2015 Settlement Documentation

Measuring Success

While the benefits of active travel are well recognised, achieving these higher level outcomes requires our interventions to be successful in shifting travel behaviour. Robust monitoring and evaluation will allow us to assess the effectiveness of this plan, demonstrate progress toward increased active travel, and ensure that investment delivers positive change.

Success will be measured at a scheme level in several ways. Traffic surveys will be used to measure the proportion of journeys that are undertaken through active means before schemes are delivered, and then again three years after construction, when any long-term increase in the number of active journeys made can be judged. These surveys can then be collated to provide a picture of success at a plan level.

Pre and post construction audits will also be used to evaluate the quality of design from a road safety perspective, and Healthy Streets tools can be used to provide a measure of the improvement delivered from a human perspective.

Reviewing the Plan

People, Places, and Provision are at the heart of what we hope to achieve through the implementation of this Plan, and we will assess the relative merits and deliverability of all schemes based on this concept.

A detailed understanding of the number of **people** living near a route, the **places** that route will connect to, and the level of **provision** we can achieve along a route allows us to objectively assess how successful a scheme could be.

We recognise that local priorities and travel habits can change over time. As towns and cities grow, and travel patterns shift, we can adjust the Plan to make sure it remains aligned with local development plans and associated local transport plans, while also remaining focused on where investment can bring the greatest benefit to the community at that time.



Designing the network

The Active Travel Network maps outline the connections needed to create comprehensive walking, wheeling, and cycling networks that link communities to key destinations. They do not specify the exact nature of the infrastructure required for success.

Having reviewed our current policies and procedures we have developed updated design guidance for active travel based on leading international best practice. As part of this review, we considered several aspects that are considered essential to successful active travel design, including road safety, school area treatments, wayfinding, inclusive design, asset management, and behavioural change.

The new design guidance marks a step change in our commitment to providing safe, inclusive, and attractive active travel infrastructure for all those who wish to walk, wheel or cycle.

Two key principles will guide the design of each scheme:

Design will be people-centred, with the aim of creating places that are welcoming and accessible to all.

Schemes will be designed to be used by as wide a range of people as possible and will consider the needs pedestrians and cyclists first.

Design will focus on the provision of high-quality infrastructure, appropriate to the situation, with safety at its heart.

Each scheme will consider the level of provision required to ensure that the infrastructure provided is safe and feels safe.

There is no one-size-fits-all design, each individual scheme will be designed to meet these key principles. The type of infrastructure appropriate to the situation will be influenced by a range of factors such as the number of existing and potential users, street lighting, traffic volume and speed, and the number of junctions along the route.

To accommodate safe, high-quality pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, we will often need to re-balance the space within our streets. We will aim to balance the needs of all road users as best we can in each situation, but with a focus on those who have the potential to be most negatively impacted by the behaviour of other road users.

This could involve narrowing carriageway widths in areas where the focus has shifted from maximising motor traffic progression to ensuring the safe and efficient movement of all road users. We may also explore options to rethink car parking on a street, or review existing bus stop locations, with the aim of improving access to local amenities and services for all.

There may also be places where we introduce traffic management measures to help make walking, wheeling, and cycling more attractive. This could include lowering speed limits or implementing one-way systems to reduce risks associated with motor traffic, especially in areas with high pedestrian and cyclist interaction. We may also restrict motor vehicle access in places where there is a desire to create places that are predominantly people focussed.

While it is not possible to show what any one scheme will look like before it has been designed, we can provide examples of high-quality infrastructure that can be implemented in different contexts.

TRAFFIC FREE ROUTES

Routes facilitating active travel remote from motor traffic



MIXED TRAFFIC

Neighbourhood areas including residential streets



MANDATORY CYCLE LANES

Mixed use places that serve a variety of functions



SEPARATED ACTIVE TRAVEL FACILITIES

Busy urban routes with high traffic volumes



Maintaining and Improving the Existing Network

We are committed to maintaining and improving existing active travel infrastructure, to ensure that walking, wheeling and cycling is safe, accessible and attractive for all.

Clean, unobstructed, and well maintained footways and cycleways are key to enabling more people to walk, wheel and cycle. Street lighting also improves feelings of personal security, particularly for women, increasing the attractiveness of active travel after dark.

Routine activities such as repairing surface defects on footways and cycleways, controlling weeds, cutting back overgrown vegetation, emptying gullies, and keeping street lighting and traffic signals in good working order all play a vital role in supporting road safety and accessibility.

Where responsibility falls to others, we will engage positively with partners, such as local councils, to ensure the active travel network is clean, well maintained, and well-lit where appropriate, so that people can enjoy safe, continuous journeys from start to finish.

For people living in rural settlements, key destinations are often within walking distance however road safety concerns or accessibility issues may prevent people from making these short journeys actively. In this context, the best return on investment is likely to involve improving the pedestrian environment to ensure that walking and wheeling are as attractive as possible. In addition to this plan, we will continue to bring forward pedestrian improvements in line with existing policies, while also exploring options to ensure a fair allocation of future investment goes towards increasing active travel in rural settlements.

Complementary measures

We will work proactively with councils and other relevant public bodies to identify opportunities in the design of new active travel schemes to further enhance public places. This work could include placing seating to help those who cannot walk long distances without a rest, or planting to enhance the look of a street. By working in partnership, we aim to maximise the potential to improve our streetscape for the benefit of all those who live or visit.



Engaging and Communicating

Stakeholder and community support is critical to delivering successful active travel schemes, which is why we have embedded engagement throughout our design and delivery process.

Effective engagement helps to strengthen scheme design, ensure inclusivity and accessibility, and build local support. This leads to schemes that are well used and valued by the community.

As each scheme is developed, we will undertake targeted engagement with key stakeholders, including schools, disability organisations, local businesses, or residents. This will help identify local needs, highlight potential challenges, and ensure that the designers understand how those most affected by a scheme currently use the area.

We will also typically hold a public engagement event to seek wider views on preliminary designs and to provide clear, accessible information about a scheme's objectives, benefits, and implications. Feedback gathered through this early engagement will be carefully considered and will directly inform design development.

When a scheme is suitably developed, we will hold a further public engagement event to provide more detailed information about the proposed measures. This will allow members of the public to better understand the implications of the scheme before construction commences. Statutory consultation will also be carried out for any schemes that require traffic regulation orders to ensure that the infrastructure we build is able to function as intended.

We understand that some people may need support and guidance before they will feel comfortable changing their travel habits. By working in partnership with schools and other organisations, we aim to ensure that the widest possible range of people have the knowledge and skills they need to take advantage of the new infrastructure we build, and the many benefits active travel offers.



Appendices

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council	Appendix 1
Ards and North Down Borough Council	Appendix 2
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council	Appendix 3
Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council	Appendix 4
Derry City and Strabane District Council	Appendix 5
Fermanagh and Omagh District Council	Appendix 6
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