

Multimillion-pound investment to inspire children to walk to school

A green initiative aimed at encouraging hundreds of thousands of children to walk to school has received £2.1 million in government support, Transport Minister Chris Heaton-Harris announced today (21 May 2021).

The funding will help walking charity Living Streets extend its [Walk to School Outreach programme](#) to more than 1,000 primary schools across the country.

The initiative, which has been running with Department for Transport (DfT) support since 2017, aims to promote the health and environmental benefits of walking to school for children aged 5 to 11 and their families. It plays an integral role in the government's ambition to ensure more than half of children aged 5 to 10 are walking to school by 2025.

The funding announced today comes during Walk to School Week and is part of the DfT's drive to enable more forms of active travel as the government builds back greener from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

It builds on the £1 million funding DfT provided to Living Streets in 2020 to 2021 to deliver a Walk Back to School programme for the academic year, extending the charity's reach to support children returning to school last autumn.

Cycling and Walking Minister Chris Heaton-Harris said:

Walking can improve our health, ease traffic and help clean up our environment, so we're proud to be investing in Living Streets' vital campaign to get more children walking to school.

This initiative has already inspired thousands of youngsters and their families to adopt greener active travel habits that will last a lifetime and I'm delighted that this funding will help enable thousands more.

Mary Creagh, Chief Executive of Living Streets, said:

It's vital that we scale up for walking to build back better for children and families after a difficult year.

Living Streets' walk to school programme is increasing the number of children walking to school and reducing cars, congestion and air pollution around school gates. This funding will help more pupils enjoy the fresh air, freedom and fun that walking to school brings.

The Walk to School Outreach programme has been very successful in recent years and in 2019 to 2020, it saw walking to school rates increase by 40% for new schools that took part – with increased walking rates sustained for existing project schools.

The funding announced today has helped Living Streets celebrate Walk to School week by supporting the distribution of challenge packs to schools across the country to get involved.

It comes as the latest of a raft of measures announced by the government to enable more people to help the environment by making more use of active travel options.

In summer 2020, the Prime Minister launched ambitious plans to boost walking and cycling, with a vision that half of all journeys in towns and cities are walked or cycled by 2030.

This includes a £2 billion package of funding for active travel over 5 years – the largest amount of funding ever committed to increasing walking and cycling in this country.

The first £250 million of the £2 billion was allocated in 2020 to 2021 on programmes including the [Fix Your Bike voucher scheme](#) and the [Active Travel Fund scheme](#), as the government has strongly encouraged local authorities to prioritise support for active travel during the pandemic.

A further £257 million of walking and cycling funding for 2021 to 2022 was announced at the Spending Review in November last year.