

News story: £23 million government funding boost to cycling and walking nationwide

- Department for Transport pledges multimillion pound investment to improve cycling and walking around the country
- funding includes support for outreach projects which aim to get thousands more children walking to school
- this funding is the latest in a series of measures to cut emissions across transport modes

Communities are set to benefit from a £23 million investment to rejuvenate cycling and walking across the UK. In the Department for Transport's latest step to drive down emissions and improve safety, Cycling Minister Jesse Norman has announced £21 million to improve significant on and off-road stretches of the 16,000-mile National Cycle Network.

A further £2 million will encourage more people to cycle and walk, particularly children and young people, so that greener travel choices are the norm, helping clean up our air.

Communities across England will benefit from upgrades to existing cycle routes and improved cycleway connectivity, to help create a safe, accessible and traffic-free network on the doorstep of millions of people. Jesse Norman, Transport Minister, said:

Cycling and walking are a key part of our plans to make transport cleaner, greener and more productive.

This funding will help ensure that everyone can enjoy wonderful routes which connect communities across the UK, and benefit from the huge health and environmental benefits of cycling.

The investment, the allocation of which will be managed by cycling and walking charity Sustrans, will fund dozens of activation projects for upgrading the network – which were identified in the recent [Paths for Everyone report](#) – including:

- refurbishing and upgrading Cinder Track North in Whitby to improve access to a substantial new housing development
- converting a poor on-road section of the NCN between Dewsbury and Huddersfield to a combination of traffic free and full segregation
- connecting current paths through the centre of Lincoln
- re-routing busy on-road sections with poor junction facilities to an alternative traffic-free route in Longbridge, Birmingham
- creating a new quiet-way route to replace a busy on-road section between

Luton and Dunstable

- improving a road crossing and re-routing to traffic-free alternatives around Ashton Court in Bristol
- improving and extending paths connecting Thatcham and Newbury

It is estimated that the health benefits associated with walking and cycling on the network prevented 630 early deaths in 2017 alone, and averted nearly 8,000 serious long-term health conditions.

Alongside this major investment to encourage people to take to 2 wheels up and down the country, the Department for Transport has also announced £2 million for broader cycling and walking initiatives.

These include the [Living Streets Walk to School outreach programme](#), which encourages young people to make walking a key part of their journeys from an early age. The scheme saw walking to school rates increase by 30% last year within schools supported by the scheme, a big step towards the government target of 55% of primary school children walking to school by 2025.

[Cycling UK's Big Bike Revival](#) will also receive investment to continue its work inspiring the 42% of people who own bikes but do not cycle, to start riding.

Xavier Brice, Chief Executive of Sustrans said:

As the custodians of the National Cycle Network we are very excited by this investment in transforming crucial links for communities across England, making it easier for everyone to walk and cycle.

The network already makes it possible for 4.4 million people to travel actively every year, to work, school or for leisure. This investment is a vital boost to achieving a network of safe paths for everyone, used and enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities.

We look forward to working with local authorities and partner organisations around the country to improve people's health, access to green spaces, and help our villages, towns and cities move sustainably

These measures are the latest in a series of actions taken by the department to reduce emissions across all modes of transport:

- the UK's bus fleet has also joined the drive to go green through the government's £48 million [Ultra-Low Emission Bus Scheme](#), which will fund 263 new zero emission buses and infrastructure to drive forward government plans to clean up the air in towns and cities
- the government has provided £1.75 million funding for innovative schemes that can cut the carbon footprint of the UK's railways – including solar panels that directly power trains, and a system that uses hydrogen and oxygen to produce steam to power engines. It's part of the government's drive to a cleaner, greener economy which is a key part of its modern

Industrial Strategy

- DfT will launch a call for evidence later this year to gather information on how to help consumers better understand the emissions resulting from their journeys and ensure they have options for offsetting those emissions should they wish to – one of the ideas for this would be to require companies selling travel tickets to offer good quality carbon offsets at the point of sale
- DfT has recently announced £60,000 funding to support the [Modeshift STARS National School Travel Awards](#) for the next 3 years – the scheme recognises students who have improved air quality by walking and cycling to school, and the continued investment will allow Modeshift to continue to develop the project up to 2022

Paul Tuohy, Chief Executive of Cycling UK, said:

We are delighted the Big Bike Revival will be going ahead again in 2019, helping tens of thousands more people to discover the joys of cycling.

Last year we put on more than 1,000 events across England, kick starting a life time of cycling for more than 40,000 people we reached.

This money will ensure even more people are helped to overcome the barriers that stop them getting on their bikes, while improving health, happiness and air quality.

Joe Irvin, Chief Executive of Living Streets, said:

Nationally the number of children walking to school has fallen significantly over recent years. However, in schools where successful initiatives like WOW are in place, we are seeing more families choose active and sustainable ways to travel.

Walking to school helps children stay active and build healthy habits for life, which is incredibly important at a time when a third of children leave primary school overweight or obese.

We are becoming increasingly aware of the impact of air pollution on our children's health – stunting their lung development and increasing the risk of asthma attacks. One in four cars during peak hours are on the school run and the toxic fumes they produce stay around the school gates long after the cars have left. We need to be making it possible for families to swap to healthier forms of travel and this funding will go a long way to doing that in these local authority areas.