

Benefits of Active Travel

Increasing the number of journeys undertaken by active modes offers personal benefits to the individual and wider benefits to society, including boosting the economy and improving the environment. This is set out in greater detail below.



Bath & North East
Somerset Council

Improving People's Lives

2.1 Addressing the Climate Emergency

Active travel offers a sustainable solution to address the Climate Emergency by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating the environmental impacts associated with transportation.

Unlike many other sectors that have made significant strides in adopting cleaner technologies and practices, the transportation sector has often fallen short of meeting climate targets.¹⁵

Despite advancements in electric vehicles, the transport sector still heavily relies on fossil fuels and contributes a substantial portion of global emissions. Emission of greenhouse gases by sector can be seen in Figure 2.1. In contrast, active travel enables zero-emission modes of transport and reduces the need for motorised vehicles, thereby decreasing congestion and pollution. Active travel modes also have a much lower level of embodied carbon which is the carbon associated with materials and the manufacturing process. To effectively combat the climate crisis, a greater emphasis must be placed on promoting and investing in active travel as a practical transport mode.

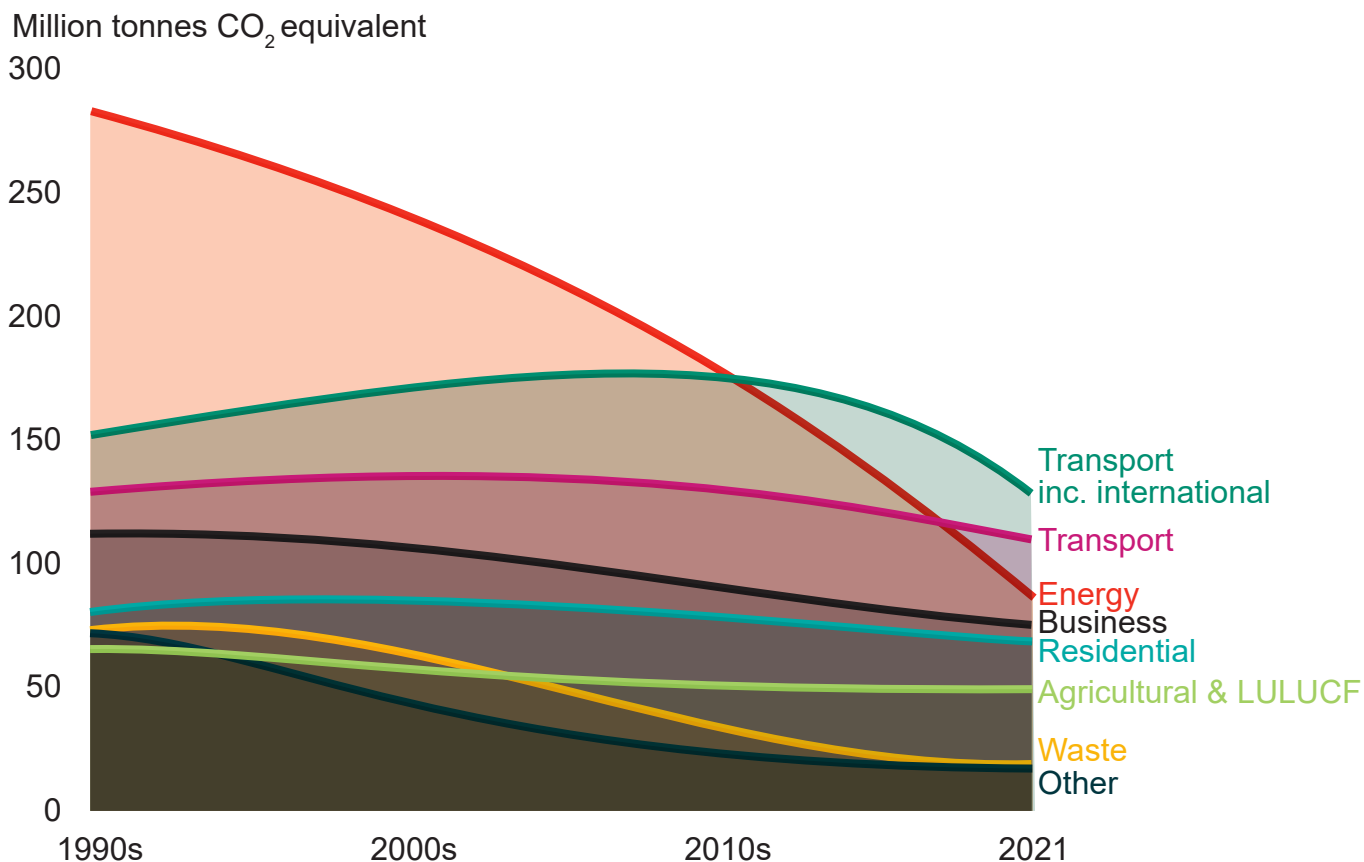


Figure 2.1 UK emissions of greenhouse gases by sector 1990 to 2021¹⁶

¹⁵ <https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Sector-summary-Surface-transport.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/transport-and-environment-statistics-2023/transport-and-environment-statistics-2023>

2.2 Healthy People

Walking, wheeling and cycling are excellent ways to incorporate exercise into a daily routine, benefiting both physical and mental health. It can help to prevent and manage over twenty chronic conditions and diseases, including some cancers, heart disease, type 2 diabetes and depression. It is also linked to overall health benefits, such as reduced injury risk, improved quality of life, increased productivity, and reduced absenteeism at work. The health benefits of regular physical activity can be seen in Figure 2.2.



Figure 2.2 Health benefit of active travel and regular physical activity

Physical inactivity is responsible for one in six UK deaths (equal to smoking) and is estimated to cost the UK £7.4 billion annually (including £0.9 billion to the NHS alone).¹⁷

B&NES is one of eleven local authorities to have been awarded funding from the Department of Transport for a three-year pilot into social prescribing. Social prescribing is a means of enabling health

Over 4 in 10 women (42%) and 1 in 3 men (34%) in England are not active enough for good health.

Public Health England - Cycling and Walking for Individual and Population Health Benefits

professionals to refer people to a range of local, non-clinical services. This includes promoting activities such as walking, wheeling or cycling as a means to address various health and social issues. This innovative practice recognises that physical activity and community engagement play crucial roles in overall health.

By prescribing active travel, healthcare professionals aim to encourage patients to incorporate walking, wheeling or cycling into their daily routines, fostering not only physical fitness but also mental well being.

Keeping active is critical in helping address current levels of obesity. The prevalence of obesity in the UK has increased dramatically over the last 25 years with Britain now being the most obese nation in Europe. The majority of the adult population (61.9%) and 28% of children aged 2-15 are either overweight or obese and it is estimated that, without clear action, these figures will rise to almost nine in ten adults and two-thirds of children by 2050.¹⁸

Walking, wheeling and cycling have also been shown to help manage stress, with studies finding that commuters who combine public transport with active travel suffering less stress. Recent research has found that active commuting is positively associated with wellbeing and is associated with reduced risk of feeling constantly under strain and being unable to concentrate compared to car travel¹⁹ Physical activity can also have a huge impact on our mental wellbeing, even a short burst of 10

¹⁷ <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5f1f59458fa8f53d39c0def9/gear-change-a-bold-vision-for-cycling-and-walking.pdf>

¹⁸ https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/banes_draft_healthy_weight_strategy_document.pdf

¹⁹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/523460/Working_Together_to_Promote_Active_Travel_A_briefing_for_local_authorities.pdf

minutes' brisk walking or wheeling increases mental alertness, energy and positive mood and participation in regular physical activity can increase self-esteem and can reduce stress and anxiety.

2.3 Local Economy Boost

Making areas more pleasant and more accessible to those on foot and cycles has been shown to have a beneficial economic effect on local businesses. Well-planned improvements to public spaces within town and city centres have been shown to boost commercial trading by up to 30%²⁰, whilst the Department for Transport estimates that active travel has a high benefit to cost ratio returning £430 for every £100 spent²¹. This is significantly higher than the benefit to cost ratio of highways schemes. For instance, the fifty-six committed major enhancements schemes included within the Road Investment Strategy returned only £220 for every £100 spent.²²

There is also compelling evidence that pedestrians and cyclists spend more than people arriving by motorised transport. A study in Bristol found that retailers on a local high street overestimated the proportion of shoppers arriving by car by almost double at 41% compared with the actual proportion of 22%. In fact, over half of the shoppers had arrived there by foot, and greater proportions had arrived by bus and cycle than those estimated by retailers. The retailers also underestimated how far pedestrians had travelled to get to the high street; over 60% lived within one mile, and pedestrians generally visited more shops than those arriving by car.²³

2.4 Connectivity and Community Cohesion

Active travel plays a crucial role in improving accessibility and connectivity both within and between communities. Walking, wheeling, and cycling infrastructure enables people to move around more easily, connecting neighbourhoods, schools, workplaces as well as our green spaces, waterways and recreational areas. This increased connectivity enhances accessibility to essential services, public transportation, and social opportunities. Active travel also promotes inclusivity by providing accessible options for individuals who may not have access or be able to use motorised vehicles.

20 <https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/media/3890/pedestrian-pound-2018.pdf>

21 <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5803/cmselect/cmpubacc/1335/report.html#:~:text=14.,health%2C%20air%20quality%2C%20decarbonisation>

22 https://nationalhighways.co.uk/media/vs3h1jx2/gfd20_0072-economic-analysis-of-rp2-brochure_v4.pdf

23 Sustrans. 2006. Shoppers and how they travel. Information Sheet LN02. Sustrans, Bristol

2.5 Inclusion and Equality

The cost of running a car is unaffordable for many people, putting them at risk of becoming socially excluded and effectively marginalised. Currently a fifth of those living in B&NES do not own a car, whilst nationally the poorest households are more than four times as likely to have no access to a car as the wealthiest.²⁴

Likewise, for some low-income families, the lack of a realistic alternative has forced some into owning a car which places a large financial burden on them. Transport is the single largest household expense (excluding mortgage repayments) for rural families, and the second largest for urban ones. Transport costs therefore contribute significantly to poverty, pushing over five million people, or 8% of the population, into poverty.²⁵ Walking and wheeling is the most affordable form of transport. Likewise, cycling costs are lower than many other transport modes, making it affordable to most income groups.

There is currently a gender imbalance in active travel uptake, reflecting disparities in accessibility, safety concerns, and societal expectations. In England, females on average made 18% more walking or wheeling trips than males but males made almost three times as many cycling trips than females and cycled on average over three times the distance.²⁶ There is a pressing need to better understand and address the current gender inequality in active travel take-up in order to create inclusive and equitable urban environments.

Active travel also offers significant benefits for children and young people, encompassing both physical and mental well being. Engaging in regular active travel not only promotes a healthier lifestyle by

reducing the risk of obesity, but it also promotes overall physical development. Moreover, active travel contributes to the development of independence and mobility skills in youngsters. As children navigate their environment on foot or by bike, they cultivate a sense of self-reliance and confidence, learning to assess and manage risks. This increased independence not only boosts their self-esteem but also instils a sense of responsibility. Overall, embracing active travel as a routine part of daily life for children and young people not only benefits their immediate health but also lays the foundations for it to become a normal everyday activity that continues into adulthood.

Good active travel links can help tackle social exclusion by improving affordable access to jobs, schools, facilities and opportunities, particularly benefiting those on lower incomes who rely on walking or wheeling, and disabled people who are challenged by poor infrastructure. In short, improving public realm and better provision and access to walking, wheeling and cycling helps to increase social equity.

24 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-travel-survey-2023/nts-2023-car-availability-and-trends-in-car-trips>

25 <https://www.smf.co.uk/publications/transport-poverty-hidden-crisis/>

26 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/walking-and-cycling-statistics-england-2022/walking-and-cycling-statistics-england-demographic-differences-in-walking-and-cycling>

2.6 Tourism Benefits

Bath is one of the UK's most historic cities with designations both as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the Great Spas of Europe, with some sites dating back thousands of years. It has a compact city centre which is best explored by walking or wheeling. Bath is striving to be accessible to all, including neurodiverse visitors and those with physical disabilities or impairments. Prioritising facilities for active modes supports improves accessibility and promotes Bath's tourism industry.

2.7 Better Use of our Road Space

There is an opportunity to re-allocate road space currently dominated by vehicles to active modes instead. This involves reimagining how road space should be used, in order to provide the infrastructure and facilities that people need to travel by walking, wheeling or cycling. By re-thinking the design of streets and public spaces, the entrenched imbalances in space for active modes can be addressed.

2.8 Local Plan (Scale and Location)

The Local Plan which is currently being developed, seeks to facilitate sustainable movement patterns by locating new development in a number of broad locations for growth including, Keynsham and Salford, the Somer Valley, Whitchurch and Hicks Gate. This provides the opportunity to increase the share of trips made by walking, wheeling and cycling. New development enables high quality infrastructure for active modes to be designed from the outset and it brings investment for improving the connections to existing routes.



2.9 Conclusion

Whatever form active travel takes, there are many positive health, economic and environmental benefits from using active travel, as Figure 2.3 shows.

The amount of funding currently spent on active travel is among the most secure investments that government can make. For every £1 spent, active travel infrastructure has an average return on investment of £5.62, and these returns increase over time. In comparison, average road building returns are around £2.50 for every £1 spent, while some projects realise no return on investment at all. The Lower Thames Crossing (costing up to £9 billion) is expected to deliver a maximum return of £1.46 for every £1 spent. If invested in active travel, £9 billion could deliver over 3,800 miles of separated cycle paths - more than double the length of the road network in Birmingham.²⁷

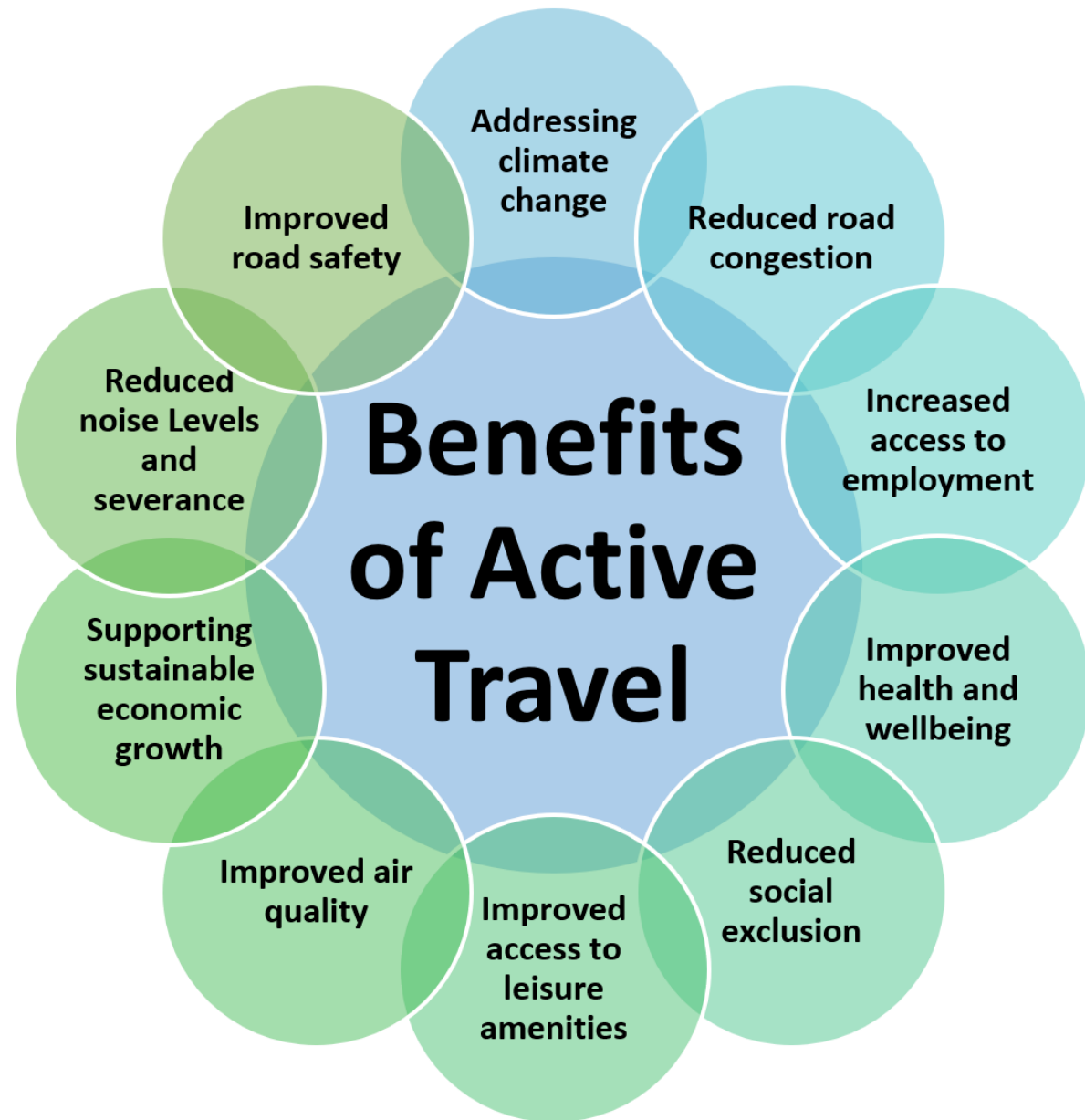


Figure 2.3 Benefits of active travel

²⁷ Stride and Ride – England’s path from laggard to leader in walking, wheeling and cycling – February 2024

Policy

Currently, our transport network is run by a number of different government bodies and agencies all working together. Below is a summary of those public bodies that deliver transport improvements at a nation, regional and local level.



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3.1 Department for Transport

The Department for Transport (DfT) is the central government body responsible for overseeing transportation policies and strategies across the United Kingdom. It plays a vital role in setting the national agenda for active travel initiatives, providing funding, guidance, and support to local authorities and regional bodies to enable the uptake of walking, wheeling, cycling, and other sustainable modes of transportation.

3.2 Active Travel England

Active Travel England, an executive agency established by the Department for Transport, was established in August 2022 with a mission to make walking, wheeling, and cycling attractive choices for everyday trips. It aligns with the government's vision for half of all short journeys in towns and cities to be undertaken by these active modes of transport by 2030. Active Travel England collaborates closely with the Department for Transport to develop and implement policies that prioritise walking, wheeling, and cycling as viable transportation options. Active Travel England provides expertise, guidance, and funding to support local authorities and regional bodies in delivering active travel infrastructure and programs, ensuring a concerted effort towards sustainable and active transportation nationwide.

3.3 Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body (Western Gateway STB)

Western Gateway STB is an alliance of eight Local Authorities and one Combined Authority that have committed to work together to drive innovation, facilitate the transition to a decarbonised transport system, maximise economic growth and improve industrial productivity by strengthening travel connections to local, national and international markets. The role of the Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body (STB) is to set out the transport strategy for the region, provide leadership on strategic transport matters and present our collective priorities for greater investment in transport in the Gateway area to government, by providing a single, unified voice for the region.

3.4 West of England Combined Authority (WECA)

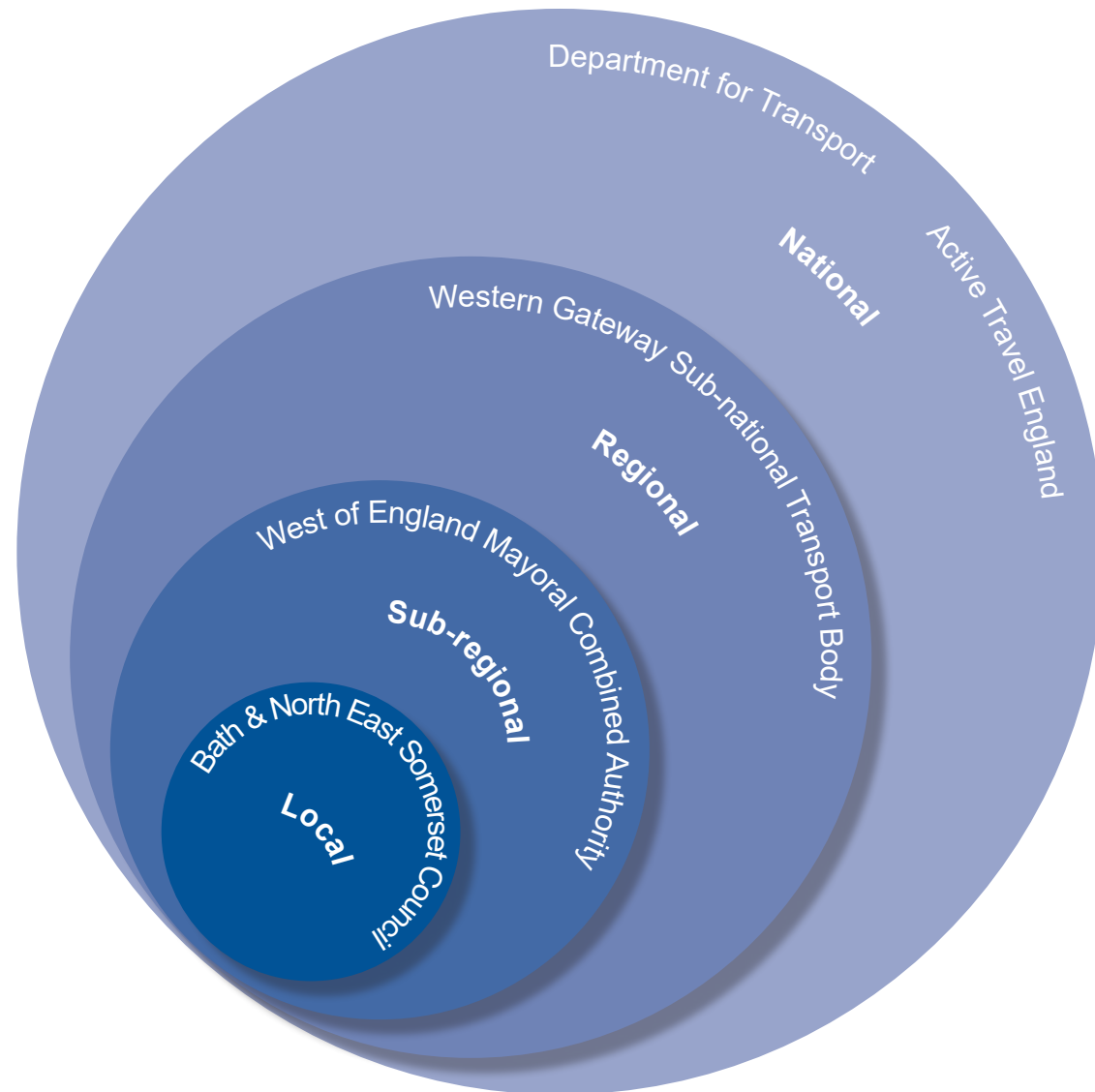
The West of England Combined Authority (WECA) is a regional governing body responsible for strategic planning and decision-making across the West of England area. It consists of the local authorities of Bristol, South Gloucestershire, and Bath and North East Somerset, as well as other key stakeholders. WECA play a pivotal role in coordinating transport policies and investments to improve infrastructure, enhance connectivity, and promote sustainable modes of transportation.

3.5 Local Authorities

Local Authorities are governmental bodies responsible for the administration and governance of specific geographic areas, such as cities, towns, or districts. Local authorities operate at the municipal level and have statutory powers to make decisions and implement policies that affect the daily lives of residents within their jurisdiction.

Local Authorities are instrumental in implementing active travel initiatives at the grassroots level. They are responsible for planning, designing, and maintaining local transport infrastructure, such as cycle paths, pedestrian walkways, and traffic calming measures. Local Authorities work closely with regional bodies, community groups, and other stakeholders to identify priorities, allocate resources, and engage with residents to promote active travel and create safer, more accessible streets for all.

This diagram shows the relationship between the various government bodies and their level of responsibility.



Policy Summary

| Document | Description |
|---|--|
| National | |
| Cycle Infrastructure Design (LTN1/20) , Department for Transport | This Local Transport Note provides guidance and good practice for the design of cycle infrastructure, in support of the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy. |
| Gear Change: A bold vision for cycling and walking, Department for Transport | The Gear Change Strategy sets out the government's objective for half of all journeys in towns and cities being walked, wheeled or cycled by 2030. |
| Gear Change: One Year On, Department for Transport | The report reviews the progress made towards achieving the goals of the Gear Change walking and cycling plan. |
| Transport Decarbonisation Plan, Department for Transport | A plan to decarbonise the entire transport system in the UK. |
| Active Travel Fund: Local Transport Authority Allocations, Department for Transport | Funding allocations for active travel schemes for local authorities in England. |
| The second cycling and walking investment strategy (CWIS2), Department for Transport and Active Travel England | The document sets out the government's objectives for to boost overall levels of walking, wheeling and cycling across England until 2025. |
| Inclusive mobility: a guide to best practice on access to pedestrian and transport infrastructure, Department for Transport | This document is a guide to best practice on access to pedestrian and transport infrastructure, creating and maintaining an accessible public realm to ensure that disabled people are not excluded from playing a full role in society. |

| Document | Description |
|---|---|
| Regional | |
| Strategic Transport Plan 2020 – 2025, Western Gateway | The Strategic Transport Plan outlines the role and functions of the Sub-National Transport Body, identifies the long-term delivery outcomes and scheme priorities from 2020 to 2025. |
| Issues and opportunities for the Strategic Transport Plan 2025-2050, Western Gateway | This document outlines the issues and opportunities facing the region in terms of transport planning for future transport growth and takes into consideration both national and local priorities. |
| South West Rural Mobility Strategy , Peninsula Transport and Western Gateway | This strategy sets out mobility policy for the whole South West of England to support the levelling-up of our local rural communities and economies. It identifies an ambitious vision for the future of rural mobility and a set of policies and proposals to achieve it. |
| Sub-regional | |
| West of England Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan 2020-2036_ | This plan is set out to transform active travel in the region and proposes capital investment of £411m by 2036 to bring the greatest increases in walking and cycling. |
| Joint Local Transport Plan 4 (JLTP4) | The Joint Local Transport Plan 4 sets out the vision for transport up to 2036 and aims to achieve a well-connected sustainable transport network that works for residents across the region; a network that offers greater, realistic travel choices and makes walking, cycling and public transport the natural way to travel. |
| West of England Joint Transport Study | The Joint Transport study is a technical report that has drawn on extensive evidence and stakeholder engagement to develop a long-term Transport Vision for the West of England to 2036 and beyond. |
| Sustainable Transport Settlement - West of England Combined Authority (westofengland-ca.gov.uk) | In April 2022, the West of England was allocated £540m for investment in local transport networks by 2027 as part of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement. |

| Document | Description |
|---|--|
| Local | |
| B&NES Corporate Strategy | This document introduces nine priorities which set out how people's lives will be improved over the next four years. One of these is to provide more travel choices making it easier for people to walk, wheel and use public transport to reduce transport emissions |
| Journey To Net Zero | The Plan proposes capital investment of £411m by 2036 and is a significant and exciting first step towards transforming active travel in the region. |
| Transport and Development Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) | It sets out the aims to achieve a well-connected sustainable transport network that works for residents, businesses and visitors across the region; a network that offers greater, realistic travel choices and makes walking, cycling and public transport the natural way to travel. |
| Low Traffic Neighbourhood Strategy | This plan outlines projects that will support the journey to carbon neutrality, considering at a high level the potential scale of carbon reduction that the future projects could deliver. |
| Creating the Canvas for Public Life in Bath | This document sets out the approach and expectations for new developments and re-developments, specifically in relation to walking, cycling, ultra-low emission vehicles, parking standards and travel plans. |
| Local Plan options consultation B&NES (bathnes.gov.uk) | The Option Consultation on the Local Plan (2022-2042) took place between February – April 2024. The Local Plan provides the planning framework for the B&NES district. |

Table 3.1 Policy Summary

The Active Travel Masterplan will support the existing Local Plan framework and will call upon those policies already included in other transport plans and strategies including the Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), The Journey to Net Zero transport plan, the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS), and the Transport & Development SPD. These documents have set out the policy framework including what we want to achieve and why. The Active Travel Masterplan will take this a step further by identifying how we achieve this.

The Active Travel Masterplan also aligns with and is being delivered in tandem with a number of other key projects not least our Liveable Neighbourhoods project, the Bath Movement Strategy and the Bath River line. The delivery of these schemes will be a coordinated process with the Active Travel Masterplan, requiring careful coordination to ensure seamless integration and successful implementation.

A timeline of B&NES Council's activity on active travel policies is shown in Figure 3.4.

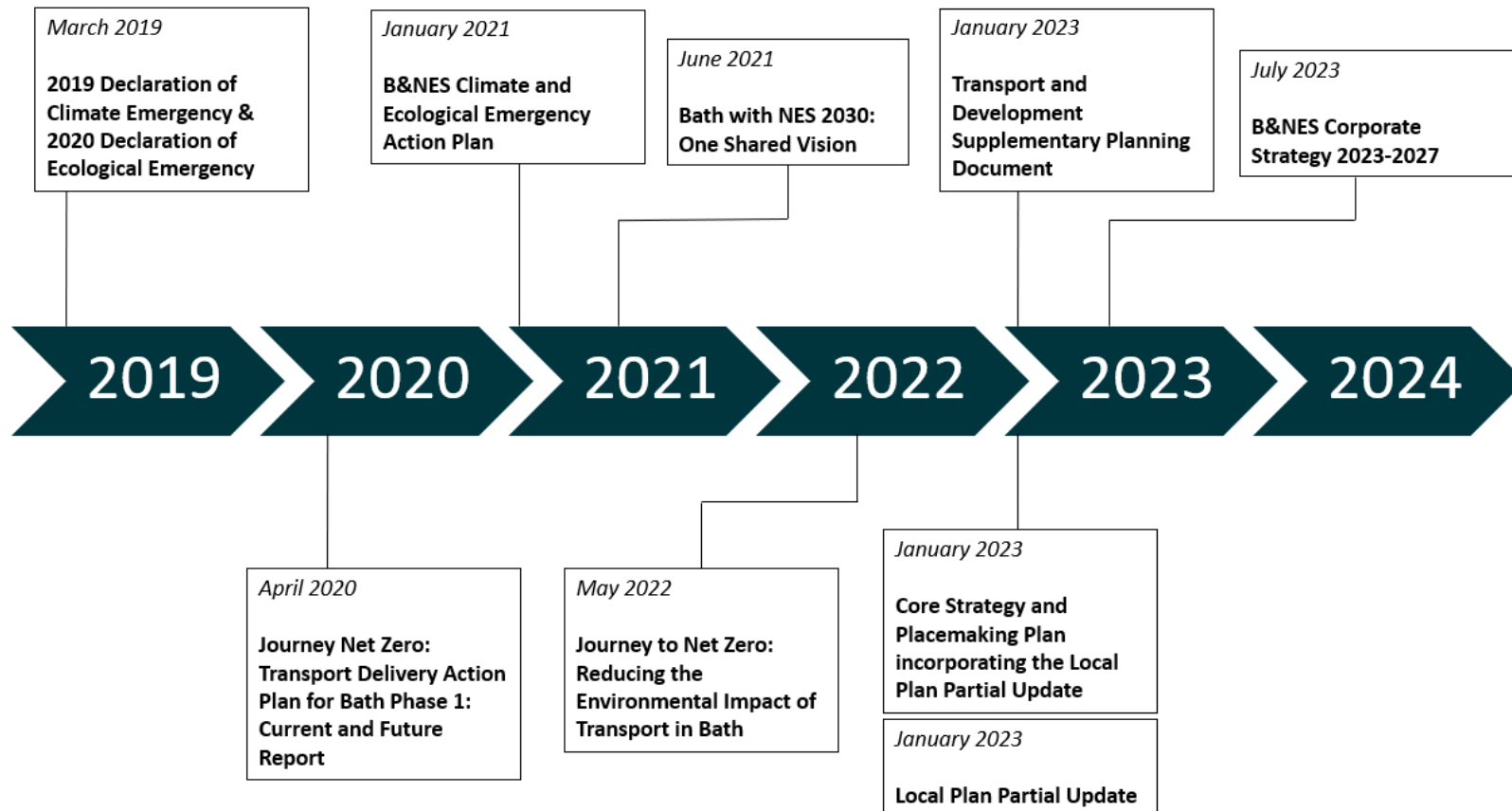


Figure 3.4 Timeline of B&NES Council's activity on active travel