

# Encouraging cycling in Wales



Gweithredu ar  
Hinsawdd Cymru

Climate  
Action Wales



Mae Trafnidiaeth Cymru yn eiddo i  
**Lywodraeth Cymru**

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# Introduction

## What

This guide is intended to get more people cycling their everyday journeys.

It has been designed to help local authorities engage the communities they serve. It highlights effective ways to increase the number of purposeful cycling journeys.

It is intended as a useful, practical document. We've undertaken and read existing research to ensure this guide is useful and promotes activities that work.

We welcome the feedback of users and local authorities. We'll integrate this feedback into future versions of this guide.

## Why

There are many benefits of getting more people to cycle to their destination. Cycling allows people to cover longer distances without using the car. It is an easy way to integrate exercise into people's day. It improves mental well-being.

Wales has an impressive number of dedicated cycle paths. However, only around 6% of adults in Wales cycled somewhere in the last week.<sup>1</sup> This proportion has not changed over the last decade. Only around 1% of children cycle to school.<sup>2</sup>

To improve people's well-being and tackle climate change, we need to increase cycling journeys. This will decrease the number of cars on the road. Pollution and congestion should also fall.

## How

Transport for Wales and Welsh Government are working with local authorities to change the way people travel. We're doing that through targeted interventions that we know work.

This guide provides a number of interventions, events and campaigns to be run at a local level. These are intended for communications professionals to use to promote active travel. It sets out key messaging to help overcome barriers to people cycling more.

It highlights a number of interventions that have been proven to work. We will update these case studies and tools as we better understand what works for communities in Wales.



150,000

Welsh adults  
cycle weekly<sup>3</sup>

Commuters  
could save money  
getting to work  
by bike<sup>4</sup>

There are  
1,200 miles  
of National  
Cycle Network  
in Wales<sup>5</sup>

# Key messaging

## Health

Cycling gets you fit. Doing it regularly can increase energy, improve cardiovascular health and help people avoid chronic illnesses.<sup>6</sup> Being outside, even just for short periods, has been shown to be beneficial for mental health.

Currently, only around 55% of Welsh adults exercise the suggested 150 minutes a week. 31% of adults get less than 30 minutes a week.<sup>7</sup> A daily commute of fifteen minutes or more by cycling would fulfill this suggested exercise.

Getting more people cycling can have substantial benefits for their physical and mental health. For businesses, the health benefits of increased cycling can mean fewer staff and student absences.<sup>8</sup>

## Environmental

The Welsh Government has set the goal of 45% of journeys being undertaken by sustainable means by 2040.<sup>9</sup> Increasing the frequency of people walking and wheeling local journeys is key to hitting this target. It will also help local authorities meet the duties of the Environment (Air Quality and Soundscapes) (Wales) Act 2024.

Getting more people cycling even just a few more journeys a week could have substantial benefits for the environment.

Cycling opens up the ability to travel longer distances sustainably. It connects people from towns and villages to cities. It provides access to hospitals, education and leisure centres. It opens up more employment opportunities.

## Time saving

For short distances, it can be faster to cycle than take the car.<sup>10</sup> Congestion and difficulties with parking can all add to car journey times.

In 30 minutes, most adults can cycle between five and seven miles. More people cycling means fewer cars, more space on the roads and faster journeys.

To reinforce this message, local authorities could put the average time it takes to cycle on signposts and maps. They could prioritise cyclists in infrastructure projects and traffic signalling. Wherever possible, cycle routes should be made accessible to trikes, cargo bikes and adapted bikes so that everyone can benefit.<sup>11</sup>

## Money saving

Cycling instead of driving saves money on fuel and car repairs.<sup>12</sup> To allow people to buy cycles and equipment at a reduced cost, local authorities could highlight schemes such as [Cycle to Work](#). Cycle hire and second hand sales are another way people can get into cycling more cheaply.

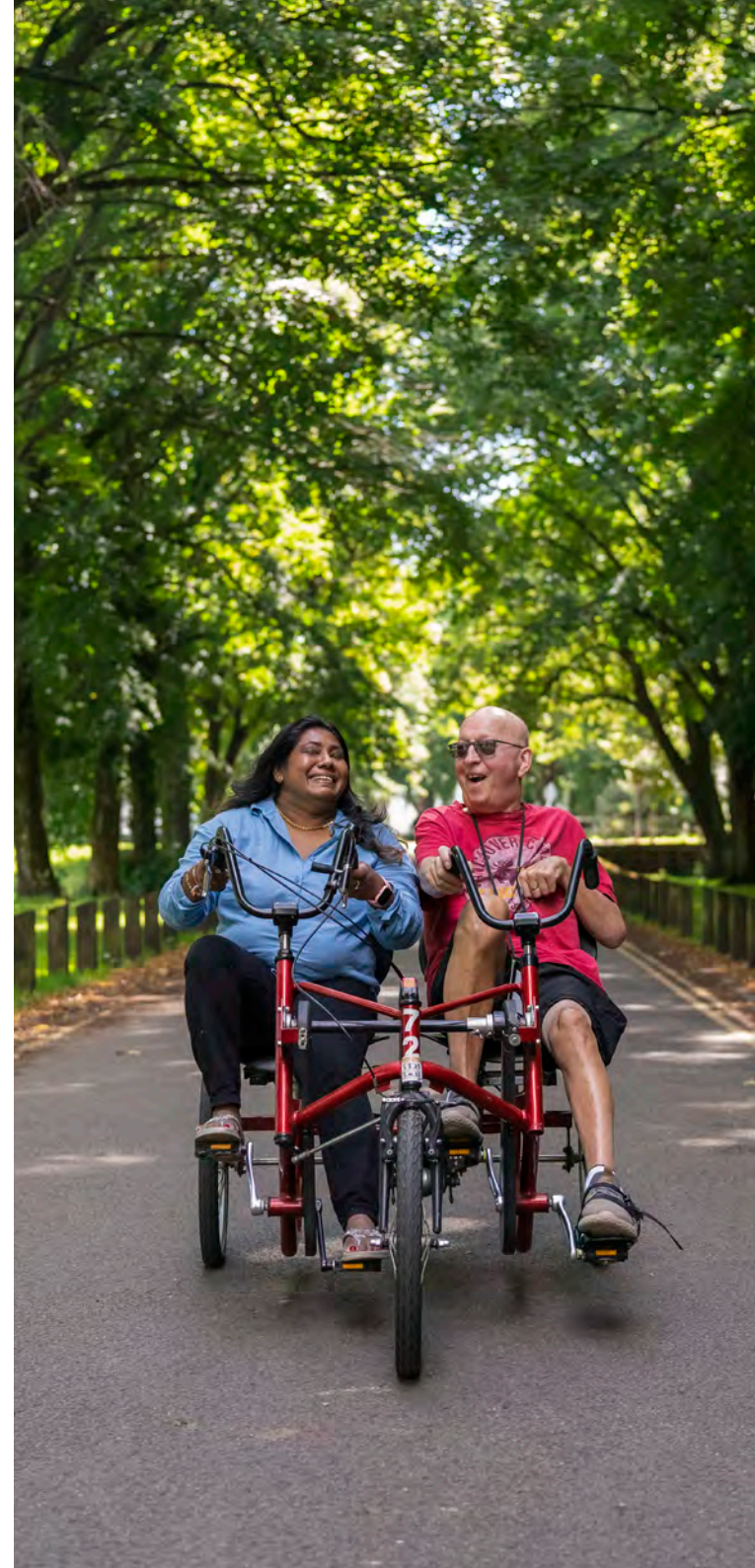
It is important to recognise that cycling comes with an often substantial initial outlay. This is especially true of e-bikes and specialist cycles for disabled people.

To prevent and mitigate against theft, signpost people to secure cycle storage, encourage them to buy a good quality lock and suggest they to insure their cycles.

## Safety

Concern around safety is often cited as a reason why people do not cycle more.<sup>13</sup> Parents may worry their children might be harmed. It is more dangerous to cycle on country lanes. Women and older people are less likely to cycle because of safety fears. A lack of dedicated cycle infrastructure can discourage people from cycling.<sup>14</sup>

It is important that any promotion of cycling engages with these legitimate concerns. Local authorities could tie in active travel promotion with wider road safety information and launching new infrastructure. Living Streets research has shown an increase in children walking or cycling to school when 20mph speed limits are introduced.<sup>15</sup>



# Interventions that work

## Start small

Travel behaviour does not change overnight. Success could be a person cycling to their work twice a week.

Start with one-off events that coincide with special days or weeks. These one-off events can then build up to more frequent events throughout the year.

Sustrans runs a [Big Walk and Wheel](#) event in March. They run a more specific [Cycle to School](#) week in September. Cycling UK runs a [Bike Week](#) in June. Their websites have lots of materials to run events.

## Route planning

Route planning has been shown to help people begin to cycle. [Traveline Cymru](#) helps people plan sustainable journeys. [DataMapWales](#) collects local Welsh cycle networks in one place. [Google Maps](#) plots cycling journeys. For planning longer distance routes, the [National Cycle Network](#) and [Cycle Travel](#) are useful.

Lack of safe infrastructure is regularly cited as a key reason why more people do cycle more. Promoting new or existing infrastructure is one way to get people cycling more.<sup>16</sup>

These promotions are especially successful on a town and city level.<sup>17</sup> We're working on understanding initiatives that work in rural areas.

## Schools and work

Initiatives that target schools and workplaces are more likely to be successful than targeting individuals. This can help build a dedicated community of people who commute by cycles.

[Healthy Travel Wales](#) has a charter for organisations to commit to. Sustrans has an established [FRideDays Bike Bus](#) event. This encourages a group of pupils and parents to cycle to school together.

It can be useful to show how cycling can be integrated as part of a longer commute. This could include highlighting cycle parking at railway stations and encouraging offices to provide staff with showers.<sup>18</sup>

# Endnotes

- 1 'How often used bike to get somewhere, 2022-23', [National Survey for Wales](#).
- 2 Cross-party Group on the Active Travel Act, Active Travel to School Toolkit (2021), p4.
- 3 Figure calculated from 'How often used bike to get somewhere, 2022-23', [National Survey for Wales](#)
- 4 Christina Bengston, [How much money can you save by cycling?](#) (2023).
- 5 Visit Wales, [Cycling and mountain biking](#) [accessed May 2024].
- 6 Public Health England, [Cycling and walking for individual and population health benefits: A rapid evidence review for health and care system decision-makers](#) (2018), p15.
- 7 'MVPA meets guidelines 150 minutes weekly, 2022-23', [National Survey for Wales](#).
- 8 Panter, J., Griffin, S., Jones, A. et al. [Correlates of time spent walking and cycling to and from work: baseline results from the commuting and health in Cambridge study](#). Int J Behav Nutr Phys Act 8, 124 (2011).
- 9 Welsh Government, [Llwybr Newydd: the Wales transport strategy 2021](#) (2021).
- 10 Department for Transport, [Journey time statistics, England: 2019](#) (2021).
- 11 Public Health England, [Cycling and walking for individual and population health benefits: A rapid evidence review for health and care system decision-makers](#) (2018), p15.
- 12 Christina Bengston, [How much money can you save by cycling?](#) (2023)
- 13 Dave Horton, Fear of Cycling (Routledge, 2007)
- 14 Sustrans, Dr Nick Cavill and Professor Adrian Davis, Active Travel & Physical Activity Evidence Review (2019), p25.
- 15 TfW, [Default 20mph speed limit on restricted roads: Phase 1 areas. Final monitoring report](#) (2023).
- 16 Sustrans, Dr Nick Cavill and Professor Adrian Davis, Active Travel & Physical Activity Evidence Review (2019),
- 17 Sustrans, Dr Nick Cavill and Professor Adrian Davis, Active Travel & Physical Activity Evidence Review (2019),
- 18 Sustrans, [How to improve bike storage for offices and employees](#) (2020)

