



The Prince's  
Responsible  
Business Network



# Toolkit **ACTIVE TRAVEL**

May 2021

**Getting people back  
to work safely**



Department  
for Transport

# TOOLKIT

## ACTIVE TRAVEL: GETTING PEOPLE BACK TO WORK SAFELY

As pressure to respond to the climate emergency grows, it will become essential for businesses to consider ways in which they can promote active travel. This toolkit outlines some of the challenges and opportunities as well as latest examples of best practice from leading responsible businesses.

### Introduction

While more and more of us are walking or cycling to work<sup>i</sup>, the rate in England still remains low<sup>ii</sup>. Commuting accounts for around 20% of the UK's transport emissions, which in turn represent 24% of overall emissions<sup>iii</sup>. In order to reach the UK government's target of net zero by 2050, the opportunities for low-carbon travel need be addressed.

However, conversations with businesses around active travel have become more complicated due to the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the widespread - although not exclusive - expansion of homeworking for large parts of the economy.

Despite offices being shut for most of 2020, the national lockdown has actually led to an increase in walking and cycling. Figures published by the Department for Transport, show that between May and July, 39% of people were walking more, and 38% of people were cycling more than before the outbreak of the pandemic.

### BITC MEMBERS REFERENCED IN THIS BRIEFING

- Heathrow
- Next
- Fujitsu
- Enterprise Rent-a-Car
- GoAhead Group
- HSBC
- bp
- Nationwide

Levels of cycling were - on weekends - 200% higher than they had been before the first national lockdown. Further to that, 94% of people surveyed stated that they would continue to walk and cycle after travel restrictions were lifted.<sup>iv</sup>

Although this increase in walking and cycling was predominantly recreational, there is now the opportunity to embed the changes seen during the national lockdown into long term travel habits as part of the broader changes in how we work and travel following the pandemic.

However, challenges to moving away from using cars remain as fears around virus transmission also means that a mass return to public transport



may not be inevitable, or even acceptable for lots of people in the short term. This is supported by survey evidence which found that 70% of Londoners no longer felt comfortable commuting to work via public transport.<sup>v</sup>

Whilst most people took to walking and cycling out of sheer necessity (most other activities were prohibited during national lockdowns across the UK), some have suggested that the bizarre conditions of lockdown could be a turning point for active travel. As roads built for private vehicles lay empty, people found that pavements and cycle lanes were inadequate to maintain social distancing.<sup>vi</sup>

Clearly travel behaviours have fundamentally changed – but how can businesses use this opportunity to help their employees embrace active travel?

### What is the business case?

Cycling and walking have well documented benefits for society, individuals, businesses, and the environment. Below are just a few examples of why active travel is a triple-win:

- **Healthy people:** people who participate in daily physical activity have approximately a 20% - 30% lower risk of depression and dementia.<sup>vii</sup> Even a 10-minute brisk walk, such as walking to the bus stop, can increase mental alertness, energy, and positive mood.<sup>viii</sup>
- **Healthy business:** reduced absenteeism and enhanced productivity at work<sup>ix</sup> - for example, employees who cycle-commute take between one and two days' less sick leave each year compared to those who drive.<sup>xi</sup>
- **Healthy environment:** reduced road congestion and improved air quality.<sup>xii</sup>

In addition, many businesses are also adopting ambitious net zero carbon targets that incorporate Scope 3 emissions across their value chain. In order to meet these commitments,

businesses will need to mitigate the emissions caused by their employees travel behaviour. Significant reduction in transport emissions can be achieved through:

- Greater ambition on modal shifts to active travel and public transport.
- Behavioural change measures such as increased working from home.
- Reduction in business trips through greater use of technology.

### What national funding is available?

The importance of increasing active travel to meet national net zero targets means that there is a significant amount of national investment available to support businesses to support, incentivise, and in some cases subsidise active travel. In 2017, the Government's Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy identified some £1.2 billion available for cycling and walking until 2021.<sup>xiii</sup>

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.<sup>xiv</sup>

The publication of the plan aligned with significant increases in walking and cycling rates due to lockdown and came with immediate guidance for local authorities to fast-track the re-allocation of road space for the increased number of cyclists and pedestrians. The plan includes a number of commitments relevant to businesses including:

- Creating a national cycling and walking commissioner and inspectorate (Active Travel England)
- Higher standards for cycling and walking infrastructure across England
- Creation of a national e-cycle support programme.

The Government has also announced that the second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy will be published later this year following the Spending Review.<sup>xv</sup> Similar investments have been made by the devolved administrations in Scotland<sup>xvi</sup> and Wales<sup>xvii</sup>.

Businesses can utilise national investment in active travel to help remove obstacles to active travel for their employees. This can be as simple as signposting employees to national schemes which subsidise cycling costs or training or working directly with local authorities who are engaged in the re-design of urban spaces. Some examples include:

- Bikeability – provides cycle training for employees. More information can be found [at the Bikeability website](#).
- Cycle to Work – whilst not funded nationally, employers are able to save on NI and Apprenticeship Levy contributions if a salary sacrifice is used for the purchase of a cycle. More information can be found [on the Cycle to Work webpage](#).
- Big Bike Revival – The Government has provided funding to support Cycling UK to provide free bike maintenance through their Dr Bike sessions as well as training courses. More information can be found [on the Cycling UK website](#).

The Government will provide over a quarter of a billion pounds for cycling and walking this financial year which will include revenue and capital funding to local authorities to deliver new infrastructure and workplace programmes to enable more cycling and walking.

### What are the barriers?

BITC has conducted research into the topic of active travel and employee engagement in close collaboration with HSBC UK, Sustrans, the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow; Cycling UK; the Ramblers Association; and Urban Transport.

This research has identified some of the common barriers that businesses are facing to encourage active travel to work. The most common barriers fell into two broad categories:

#### Environmental barriers

- Lack of cycle paths or safe routes
- Intensity of journey either due to distance or hills
- Weather
- Lack of secure cycle parking
- Lack of showers at work
- Ensuring facilities are COVID-safe
- Availability of cycles

#### Individual barriers

- Perceived lack of safety
- Perceived attitude of other road users
- Convenience of using a car
- Lack of skills
- Lack of confidence
- Lack of time due to family, work, or social commitments
- Cost of buying a cycle (particularly for those on lower incomes).

The role that employers can play in promoting active travel fundamentally lies in their ability to break down as many of these barriers as possible.

### What are the opportunities?

Sizing up the list of environmental and individual barriers to tackle can seem like a daunting task. However, although businesses unfortunately cannot do much to address the problem of British weather, there is lots that can be done to address these other barriers. Our research has shown that interventions can be grouped into the following areas:

- Survey and strategy
- Infrastructure, facilities, and ways of working
- Awareness and engagement

- Training and facilities
- Financial incentives

A route map of these interventions can be found on Page 9 of this guide. This quickly visualises the journey you can take to becoming an employer that is committed to active travel.

### Survey and structure

The first step in becoming an active travel employer should be to understand your travel habits. This will provide a baseline from which you can improve upon as well as understanding of specific barriers in your workforce. This will allow you to target your time and efforts on interventions that will make a real difference.

As part of this exercise, it is also useful to conduct an assessment of the current infrastructure in your officespace. If you are unclear on what infrastructure is required, you can use the [online self-assessment tool](#) from Cycling UK to assess your space (although this is mainly focused on cycling, there will be some overlap with the facilities you might require for walking as well). If you share your building with other businesses, you should reach out to them to understand their active travel habits and ambitions. This may allow you to work collaboratively to ensure that all employees in your building can reap the benefits of active travel.

Surveys can also be used to track the impact of active travel programmes which you promote. Although the mental, physical, and social benefits of active travel are well founded, demonstrating the positive impact on your own employees will help to support the business case for more investment.

As part of this initial scoping phase, businesses should reach out to the active travel team based in their Local Authority as their plans may well

align with yours, and there may be opportunities to work in partnership or pool funds.

### Infrastructure and ways of working

After you have conducted your assessment, you will have a better idea about some of the infrastructure that may need to be improved in order for employees to be able to walk and cycle into the office. Addressing these improvements as a priority reduces the potential frustration at lack of capacity or facilities for new active travel commuters on their arrival to the workplace.

Consider investing in increases or improvements to facilities available to employees to cycle and walk to work. This could include providing safe and secure bike storage, lockers, and showers for employees. If you are in a shared building, consider co-funding these facilities with your co-tenants to support all employees in the building. Providing a booking system for facilities will also allow you to provide these facilities in a COVID-secure way.

If you are unable to create additional infrastructure, consider collaborating with local gyms to provide extra shower facilities for employees and benefits from discounted membership options. This will further help improve employees' health and wellbeing, as well as providing a great employee benefit.

As well as thinking about physical infrastructure, it is also useful to think about ways of working and how these might have an impact. For example, implementing flexible working and staggered working hours. This reduces the need for less-confident cyclists to travel when the roads are busiest.

Some employers are also considering allowing employees to work in regional hubs and moving away from centrally located headquarters. These measures would enable some employees who



previously could not afford to live within walking or cycling distance to the office.

Another quick win for some businesses could be to introduce more relaxed and flexible office attire for employees. A more relaxed dress-code can pose less demand for shower facilities in the workplace and give more flexibility.

### Awareness and engagement

Once you have your infrastructure in place, you can start to engage your employees, raise awareness, and get people active. Using the results of your survey will help you to define the best methods based on how engaged your workforce are already.

Try communicating best routes to the workplace – and engage with the relevant active travel team at your Local Authority to support with this. During lockdown, many local authorities have delivered improved cycling and walking routes and increased the number of permanent and temporary cycle/walking lanes to comply with social distancing measures. This has led to more accessible routes for those taking up active travel. Cycle UK's [Cycle to Work route planner](#) is a practical tool to promote finding the most suitable route.

Other ways to engage your employees may include:

- Guided routes
- Buddying for less experienced cyclists
- Cycling or walking groups
- Team challenges
- Campaigns on social media, intranet, or around the office.

### Training and upskilling

A reason for lack of engagement around active travel may be down to lack of confidence and experience. Consider how your business can support those who wish to overcome personal barriers, learn more, and build their confidence. This could include signposting or subsidising the cost of cycle training for those who are unable to cycle. Alternatively, cyclists who are proficient but lack confidence may benefit from a work cycling buddy or walking guide who can get them more familiar with local routes, and boost their confidence levels.

### Financial incentives

The cost of purchasing a cycle can be an initial barrier for many people (this is often compounded by a lack of experience as people don't want to make a big investment in a bike if they don't feel confident on the roads). However, there are a range of cycle-friendly tax incentives which have been introduced such as Cycle to Work schemes.

If an individual earns National Minimum (or Living) wage, they are often precluded from being able to have a conventional salary sacrifice through the Cycle to Work Scheme as any deduction from their salary would take you below a legally acceptable pay rate.

However, employers can support lower paid workers by offering pool bikes. Some employers use their National Insurance Contributions savings to fund such schemes. Alternatively, you could help lower paid workers to participate in Cycle schemes by offering a longer salary sacrifice period – for example, running the scheme over 18, 24 or 36 months instead of 12.

Employers can also support with the financial burden of cycle maintenance, especially for those who have resorted to old and unloved bikes in lockdown. Employers can make use of free Dr Bike sessions delivered by Cycling UK as part of the Big Bike Revival programme. As part of the

programme, a trained bike mechanic can run a free clinic at your workplace.

### What are businesses doing?

#### NEXT: TRAVEL PLANNING GOLD

For retailer Next, showing a commitment to sustainable UK high streets is more important than ever. Travel2Next is the company's staff travel department that oversees, and compiles travel plans throughout the business and submits data to local authorities. Among its activities are monthly travel competitions, travel surgeries and car-free campaigns.

Prior to COVID-19 Leicester's Head Office staff of 4,300, those traveling sustainably to work can access daily £2 Travel Incentive vouchers to spend in the staff shop. The scheme expanded at the start of November to Next's largest distribution site (Elmsall Complex) in Pontefract where car-share users will also be issued vouchers. Whilst the vouchers have been suspended due to the pandemic, staff are still taking part in sustainable competitions in which they are seeing over 600 staff enter each month.

Other than Head Office (the first corporate company to be awarded a Gold accredited Travel Plan in the UK), a number of distribution sites and stores have now achieved accreditations for their Travel Plans, and they are working with another 100 Next stores towards accreditations later in 2021.

#### HEATHROW: CYCLING TAKING OFF

Heathrow is making great strides to ensure that cycling to and from work is not only easy and safe, but also desirable and rewarding. From a dedicated Cycle Hub to Cycle Champions and training schemes, Heathrow's ambition is to make colleagues feel sufficiently supported to get from home to work on a bike and discover the benefits of having a reliable journey time and exercise on the way to and from work.

This year, Heathrow will be celebrating a decade of the Heathrow Cycle Hub, the UK's first and only dedicated airport cycle shop. It is a one-stop shop for colleagues providing discounted equipment, training and specialist advice, free maintenance, and discounted repairs. The Cycle Hub now has well over 2,000 members and Heathrow plans to increase this further, along with cycle mode share for colleague commutes, in the coming years.

#### FORSTER: SMALL BUSINESSES CAN BE HEALTHY TOO

At Forster Communications, an employee-owned small business based in London, staff earn 50p per mile when cycling to work – that's 1.5 times the amount suggested by DfT. They also collect 'pedal points', with each leg of the journey equating to five minutes' additional annual leave. With plenty of safe bike storage, showers, and lockers at work, plus access to free cycle proficiency training, bike maintenance and 'bike buddies' who are happy to join colleagues on new routes - it's little surprise that almost half of Forster's staff cycle to work.

#### FUJITSU: STEP CHANGES

For the past nine years, Fujitsu colleagues have participated in the Virgin Pulse Global Challenge for wellbeing. In 2019, 882 colleagues achieved an impressive average 13,936 daily steps – well above the 10,000 recommended and encompassing the commute (even cycling can translate into 'steps'). Fujitsu was named Top Performing UK ICT organisation in the 2019 Challenge. As a result of the Global Challenge, 75% of employees reported reduced stress.

In 2020, Fujitsu implemented a new wellbeing app for a 6-month period which incorporated physical challenges. This is now being reviewed to see how it can be rolled out globally. In addition, they run a Cycle to Work scheme with approximately 300 people taking part every year. This scheme has proved popular for keen cyclists

as well as those that are new to it, and some have reported that the Scheme has supported them to enter races and with personal weight-loss goals.

### ENTERPRISE RENT-A-CAR: WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Enterprise Rent-A-Car is working with Brompton Bikes and Imperial College London on an innovative project to give staff and students greater choice when traveling to and between campuses, including encouraging more active travel.

The three organisations have created a mobility hub at Imperial College's South Kensington campus, which gives staff and students access to two low emission vehicles, plus 25 Brompton folding bikes, including five electric bikes. The hub will enable users to easily mix and match, walking, cycling, driving and public transport. This pilot project is part of a study by Imperial researchers that aims to understand the uptake of shared mobility schemes and their potential to enable sustainable travel choices.

Enterprise and Brompton are already working together on other projects, including a similar mobility hub launched by BP in Greenwich, south London. This hub brings together public transport, access to Enterprise Car Club vehicles and bike hire. By working together Enterprise and Brompton are championing the adoption of shared transport systems which will make it easier for travellers to seamlessly switch between different types of transport, depending on their needs.

Both organisations are keen to see a sustainable 'modal shift' embraced by individuals, businesses and public sector organisations which will encourage greater active travel, which in turn improves health, quality of life and the environment.

### HSBC: GOING THE EXTRA MILE

As part of its mission to create a greener, fitter, healthier Britain, HSBC UK has joined forces with British Cycling in 2017 to get two million more Brits on their bikes by 2020 – and this begins with HSBC UK's 34,000 employees. Working with the University of Glasgow, in collaboration with the University of Edinburgh, the first phase of the project has analysed all the available studies and data on the key barriers to cycling – and identified the gaps.

**“The Cycle Nation Project is an excellent example of cross-sector collaboration to address a major societal challenge and provides a unique opportunity to undertake ground-breaking research.”**

**Professor Jason Gill, University of Glasgow**

#### Piloting interventions at HSBC UK

The second phase tested the feasibility and short-term effectiveness of integrated approaches to increase cycling participation amongst HSBC UK staff in pilot locations. Initial findings demonstrated that local cycle champions feel competent and comfortable in delivering Cycle Nation practical on and off-road training. Their colleagues reported enjoying the sessions gaining confidence and skills.

The Cycle Nation Project enabled an increase in cycling and wellbeing, leading to participants spending 43 minutes more cycling and 150 fewer minutes in motorised transport per week.

Whilst nationwide-roll out of the project has been paused due to the pandemic, the early findings demonstrate the holistic benefits of increasing cycling participation to make the UK greener, fitter, and healthier and lessons learnt can inform further cycling participation across UK workplaces as we ease out of lockdown.



### What will active travel look like in the recovery from COVID-19?

There are clearly many great examples of businesses who have supported active travel prior to the pandemic. But many employers are now faced with big questions about how their employees work, interact, and travel as we move into the recovery phase. Whilst increased home-working has not been without its challenges, many people have seen the benefits including:

- Reduced costs of commuting
- Ability to exercise in daylight hours
- Better work life balance

Despite some of the challenges of working from home during lockdown, many employers are not looking to return to the standard model of working where being in a centrally located office for 5 days a week is the norm. A recent survey found that FTSE 250 companies were three times more likely to want to pursue a 'hybrid -model' where work is split more flexibly between homes, local hubs, and central HQs.<sup>xviii</sup>

So what are the opportunities for active travel in this new way of working?

### NATIONWIDE: WORK ANYWHERE

Giving employees more flexibility around how and where they work presents a significant opportunity for active travel, especially seeing as one of the biggest barriers to active travel is distance to a central HQ. A great example of this is Nationwide who recently announced a new policy which seeks to build in a greater degree of flexibility for all of their office-based staff.<sup>xix</sup>

After a survey found that their staff wanted to retain the benefits of working from home, with the ability to enjoy the occasional benefits of interacting with colleagues in person, Nationwide's chief executive said, *"We are putting our employees in control of where they work from, inviting them to 'locate for their day' depending on what they need to achieve."* Giving staff the option to work from home, or alongside staff in any of their high-street branches will likely create more opportunities for people to walk or cycle to work than before.

### GO-AHEAD: THE FIRST AND LAST MILE

It is also important to understand that, for some journeys, solely relying on active travel may not be possible. However in these instances, combining the use of public transport with active travel will be essential in supporting people to get around whilst also meeting the Government's climate ambitions.

Go-Ahead Group, who operate buses across the UK, have conducted research into the topic to understand the travel habits of their customers. As part of this strategy, they are seeking to understand the different ways in which they can influence the many types of people using their services to use active travel as part of the 'first or last mile' of their journey.

Mark Anderson, Head of Commercial Innovation, states that GoAhead Group *"are further exploring ways to better integrate rail and bus with active modes by considering ways to reduce obstacles, such as bike storage and stowage and access to station facilities, that might nudge more people to shift their first and last mile transport to active modes."*



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## 02 IMPROVE INFRASTRUCTURE & WAYS OF WORKING

- Invest in safe cycle storage, lockers, and showers
- Partner with a local gym to provide additional facilities
- Provide a COVID-secure booking system for your facilities
- Introduce a flexible working policy and an informal dress code

## 04 IMPROVE CONFIDENCE AND SKILLS

- Use cycle buddies or walking guides to help improve knowledge of local area
- Signposting to or contributing to costs of cycling training



## 01 UNDERSTAND YOUR BASELINE

- Survey your teams to understand their travel habits
- Measure your carbon emissions associated with travel
- Assess your current facilities and usage
- Consult with the active travel team at your Local Authority to see how they can support

## 03 RAISE AWARENESS AND ENGAGE YOUR PEOPLE

- Communicate best routes and sharing route planners
- Make it fun by creating walking/cycling groups or starting Team Challenges
- Internal communications through intranet or social media
- Consider gaining accreditation as a Cycling Friendly Employer



## 05 REMOVE FINANCIAL BARRIERS

- Offering cycle pools or longer salary sacrifice periods for lower-paid employees
- Paying above DfT tax-free mileage rates
- Contributing to the cost of cycle maintenance.

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