

Spending Review representation

Living Streets response

Introduction

Living Streets is the national charity that stands up for pedestrians. With our supporters we work to create safe, attractive and enjoyable streets, where people want to walk.

We started life in 1929 as the Pedestrians Association and have been the national voice for pedestrians throughout our history. In the early years, our campaigning led to the introduction of the driving test, pedestrian crossings and 30 mph speed limits. Eighty five years on, we continue to influence decision makers nationally and locally, run successful projects to encourage people to walk more, and provide specialist services to help reduce congestion and carbon emissions, and improve public health. We want to make sure that every community can enjoy the benefits of walking.

Key recommendations

Strategic, long term investment in walking is needed to meet existing policy commitments and reverse the decline in walking.

We are calling on the Government to take action in the forthcoming Spending Review by:

- Earmarking funds across the relevant government departments to fund a future Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy.
- Safeguarding capital and revenue funding to follow on from the current Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) ending in April 2016.

Summary

People today walk almost a third less than they did just twenty years ago. The decline in walking impacts everyone and is contributing to a continuing trend of inactivity, the accompanying detrimental health consequences of which are putting an unsustainable pressure on the UK's health and social care systems.

The government must act now to reverse the decline in walking and get the nation moving. Some significant and welcome steps have already been made:

- A government commitment to reverse the decline in primary school children walking to school (increasing to 55% by 2025).
- A commitment for the first time to set out a long term plan for improving walking and cycling in a Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS).

In addition, the Conservative 2015 Election Manifesto commits to tackling childhood obesity and reducing the number of cyclists and vulnerable road users killed or seriously injured on our roads every year.

Evidence shows walking doesn't just happen – it requires capital and revenue investment to create 'walkable' places and change behaviours.

To ensure Government commitments can be delivered it is vital that funds are earmarked for cycling and walking in the forthcoming Spending Review.

The case for investment

The cost of inactivity is estimated to be costing £8.2 billion a year to England's economy¹.

Reversing the decline in walking would have significant benefits to health, transport and the local economy. Walking interventions are low cost and can provide government, both nationally and locally with cost savings. It is a quick win solution,

supporting local economies, local environments and the health and finances of the population.

Around one in two women and a third of men in England are damaging their health through a lack of physical activity². Physical inactivity directly contributes to one in six deaths in the UK; the same number as smoking³. It increases the risk of serious illnesses like Type 2 diabetes, heart disease and certain cancers and makes it more likely people will be overweight or obese⁴.

With an increasingly aged population, a continuing trend of inactivity, with its accompanying detrimental health consequences, will put an unsustainable pressure on the UK's health and social care systems⁵.

As well as direct costs to the NHS, inactivity also creates costs to the wider economy through sickness absence and through the premature death of productive individuals. In England, the costs of lost productivity have been estimated at £5.5 billion per year from sickness absence and £1 billion per year from the premature death of people of working age⁶.

While increasing the activity levels of all adults who are not meeting the recommendations is important, targeting those adults who are significantly inactive will produce the greatest reduction in chronic disease⁷. For most of these people, walking is the most accessible and realistic way of becoming active.

It has been estimated that the health benefits of increased walking and cycling could save the NHS £17 billion over a twenty year period (2012-31)⁸.

Walking was recently described by Simon Stevens, the Chief Executive of NHS England, as a 'miracle cure'. It is essential that the government encourages the nation to build activity into their everyday lives. Active travel and in particular, getting more people walking, is key.

Beyond health, there are many other economic benefits to investing in walking.

Supporting retail vitality

The Living Streets “Making the case for investment in the walking environment” report⁹ highlights that improvements to the walking environment can increase the economic value of, and economic activity within, an area. This is reflected, for example, in the sale price of residential properties and the rental price of retail premises. Case study evidence suggests that well-planned improvements to public spaces can boost footfall and trading by up to 40%¹⁰.

Transport for London’s 2011 ‘Town centre study’¹¹ found that people walking to a town centre spent an average of £93 per week there, compared with £56 for car users and £70 for bus users.

Business and growth

Well designed places attract people, business and visitors and deliver benefits far greater than their relatively modest costs. The Local Sustainable Transport Fund provided £600m of Departmental funding to 96 projects run by local authorities and have been estimated to have had a long term positive impact on business and growth in the order of £3 billion¹².

Congestion

Economic consequences of congestion are well documented (currently around £11bn per annum in urban areas)¹³. Currently 23 per cent of cars on the road at peak times are taking children to school¹⁴. 14 per cent of school journeys under a mile are being driven, a distance that could be walked within 20 minutes¹⁵. The Living Streets LSTF Walk to School Outreach project (Sept 2012 - March 2015) resulted in increases in walking rates by an average of 23% and a corresponding drop in car use of 32%.

Economics of leisure and tourism

Walking (including rambling and hiking) is the most popular outdoor activity by far – and twice as common as swimming or the gym¹⁶. In 2001, 4.3 million domestic holidays were based around walking¹⁷. Walking tourism in 2003 brought £2.76 billion

to the English economy, and supported up to 245,500 FTE jobs¹⁸. Walking in the countryside was the 5th most popular activity for overseas visitors in 2009¹⁹.

Value for Money

Investing in walking schemes provides excellent value for money. Measures that lead to higher levels of walking have significant health benefits, both in terms of cost savings to the NHS, improved productivity and longer lives, as well as traditional ‘transport’ benefits such as decongestion, travel costs and road casualties²⁰. Moreover, delivery time-spans are far shorter than for most other transport interventions.

Department of Transport values ‘very highly’ any scheme which returns more than £4 for every £1 invested. In a recent report by the DfT, the mean benefit to cost ratio for walking and cycling schemes was calculated at 5.62:1²¹.

In March 2015, the DfT published a report bringing together recent UK evidence on the value for money of walking and cycling schemes²². The table below summarises key results quoted in the report, supplemented by our own data, and demonstrates the excellent value for money that active travel schemes deliver.

Table 1. Value for money of active travel schemes (based on DfT, 2015 and our own data)

Project / Programme	BCR	Comments
Sustainable Travel Towns	4.5:1	Decongestion benefits only
Cycling Demonstration Towns	2.6:1	Adult health benefits only
Local Sustainable Transport Fund	5.1:1	Ex-ante appraisal; 12 large schemes
Cycling Ambition Grants	5.5:1	Ex-ante appraisal; 12 funded schemes
Linking Communities Fund	10:1	Based on eight representative schemes; BCR rises to 13.8:1 when children are assigned values similar to adults

'Claiming the Health Dividend' literature review / meta-analysis	5.6:1	Average BCR for 13 UK projects, over half of which were DfT-funded <i>Links to Schools</i> infrastructure projects
TfL Cycling Vision	2.9:1	Ex-ante appraisal; large programme and conservative BCR
<i>(the following 3 project BCRs were sourced directly from Sustrans and Living Streets)</i>		
Connect2	6.3:1	Evaluation of 84 schemes aiming to reduce severance for pedestrians and cyclists; BCR rises to 8:1 when children are assigned values similar to adults
Walk to	7.6:1	Economic webtag appraisal (conducted by Capita) 2014. BCR of 8.32:1 for the whole project, and 7.64:1 for the school elements
Walking Cities	3.8:1	WebTAG appraisal, including physical activity benefits.

Delivering on Government commitments

The Government has committed to reverse the decline in primary school children walking to school; develop a long term plan for walking and cycling; tackle childhood obesity; and reduce the number of vulnerable road users killed or seriously injured on our roads each year.

To deliver on these promises, the Government must earmark funds across the relevant departments to fund a future Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy in the forthcoming Spending Review.

Currently we are concerned that the Spending Review may result in major national projects and infrastructure programmes being safeguarded while funding for local capital and revenue programmes to support walking and cycling will be severely hit and may in some cases cease altogether (like the Local Sustainable Transport Fund).

Future investment should provide a balance of revenue and capital funding.

A 2014 report produced for the DfT revealed that the best overall value for money is achieved from programmes offering both revenue and capital, with flexibility for local authorities to choose what is right for their particular circumstances (typically 30-50% revenue and 50-70% capital of investment is required)²³. The report highlighted that

where capital investment is married with investment in behaviour change programmes; the behaviour change element yields a disproportionately high return on investment, and as such greatly improves the overall BCR of the intervention.

Walk to School

Meeting Government ambitions to increase the number of primary school children walking to school to 55% by 2025 will require investment in capital and behaviour change schemes that we know work.

Funded through the LSTF, the Living Streets Walk to School project currently works with 854 primary schools across 15 local authorities achieving an on average 22% sustained increase in walk to school rates.

It has been calculated that rolling out Walk to School in England over a five year period would at current costs (prior to efficiency savings) require an investment of £102million. This would achieve the necessary trajectory required to meet the 55% walk to school ambition by 2025.

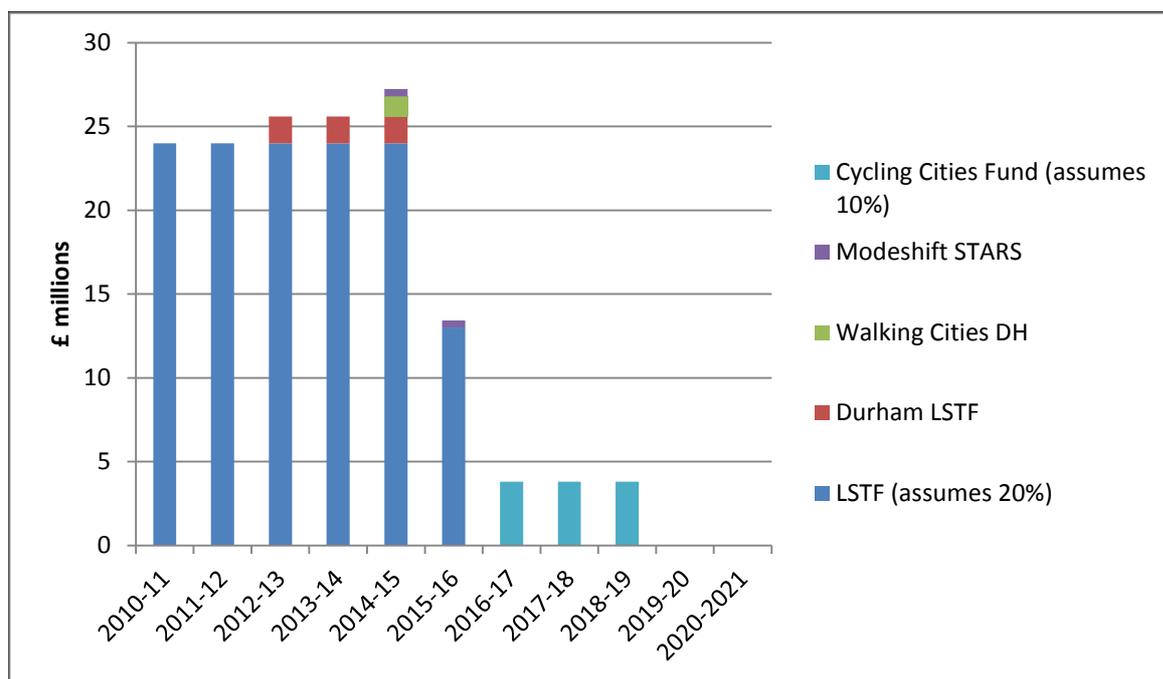
Follow on from the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF)

The Local Sustainable Transport Fund (2011 – 2016), has represented the largest single government investment in active travel. It has resulted in economic, health, social and environmental benefits that are widely understood across government.

There is a very real danger that a lack of follow on from the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) will lead to a loss of personnel, expertise and delivery capacity, putting the Government's walking and cycling ambitions at risk.

From a peak investment of £28 million, funding for walking will fall to £12.5 million in 2015/16, and to under £5 million thereafter (indirectly as part of the Cycle Cities Ambition Grant). Under current spending plans, overall spend for walking will fall to under 10p per head from 2016. Revenue spend will be zero.

Government spend on walking 2010-21



Other funding streams for walking are under threat also. Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) control transport spending through the Local Growth Fund, and clear expectations were set for them to invest in cycling and walking. However in practice, only 14 out of 38 Growth Plans mention walking and cycling, attracting just 4.1% of total investment (50% of this is in only two areas).

In addition, it is expected that a general reduction in funding for local authorities will also affect walking, since, transport is not generally a statutory requirement and is therefore likely to be disproportionately targeted for savings.

In these circumstances, ambitions shared by many to increase cycling and walking will be much more difficult to achieve.

We would be happy to discuss any of these points with you and your officials, and look forward to hearing from you.

Tom.Platt@livingstreets.org.uk

Head of Policy and Research

Living Streets

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