Creating Walking Cities

Walking Summit
Has pavement parking stalled?
Campaign success for Local Group
Welcome to your Walking Cities edition of
WALK, TALK, THINK

After years of campaigning, the UK Government published its first-ever Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS) in late April. Crucially the quantifiable targets for cycling and walking which 1,200 of our supporters demanded from the minister are included. The requirement to have a periodic CWIS is now enshrined in law.

In the run-up to the June general election, we joined together with a group of active travel charities to call on all the political parties to adopt these targets.

On the DfT website I said: “This is a historic moment. Making it easier for people to walk their everyday journeys will improve our health, economy and social welfare. We now need to turn good intentions into practical progress and help government step up to the new ambitions.”

Of course this is not the limit of our ambition. Though it is underpinned by some medium term funding, there is no new pot of money. But it is a great foundation for the long-term planning that we and other active travel groups have been calling for.

Whilst this is a devolved issue, Scotland already has a National Walking Strategy and Wales an Active Travel Act. So we now need to keep up the pressure throughout the UK.

A very big thank you to all the Living Streets supporters, members, trustees and staff, past and present, who over the past three years have made this possible.

Far too often walking is overlooked as a way of getting about. CWIS is not a cure-all, but it is certainly a big step in the right direction.

Best wishes and happy walking,

Joe Irvin

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Please get in touch if you require the magazine in an alternative format.

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Our streets deserve to be so much more than corridors for traffic. They are the public spaces in which we play out our everyday lives. How we experience them has an impact on each of us as soon as we step out of our front door.

The reduction in physical activity and the rise of obesity; the devastating cost of air pollution on our health; and the five thousand pedestrians killed or seriously injured on Britain’s roads each year are all a result of our car-centric lifestyles.

Walking Cities mean better cities for everyone. And whilst we’re faced with fighting a legacy of designing our towns and cities around cars rather than people, it’s not too late to turn things around. Our Blueprint for Change lays out what needs to be done to create liveable, healthier streets.

Walking around the world

Across the world, it’s being realised that when people walk more, pollution and traffic go down, investment is attracted and health and well-being improve.

There are examples of practical and effective actions to make that happen all across the globe.

Paris has unveiled plans to reclaim some of its most beautiful, but also most congested squares, for people; Buenos Aires introduced an ambitious four-year plan aiming to have 90 per cent of central district streets with pedestrian and cycling priority; and Melbourne’s ‘Local Connectively Plan’ has resulted in a network of neighbourhoods which have access to social, leisure and retail facilities within a 20 minute walk of people’s home – it’s no wonder it’s regularly classed as one of the most liveable cities.

Action is being taken at home too. Edinburgh is delivering on a citywide 20mph scheme covering every residential, school and shopping street; Nottingham extended its tram system in 2015 which both deterred car use and helped fund investment in walking, cycling and public transport; and the Mayor of London’s new ‘Healthy Streets’ approach is a commitment to strategies that will help Londoners use cars less and walk, cycle and use public transport more.

Our Blueprint for Change identifies 7 steps towards a Walking City, based on these examples of best practice. Each step will help improve your town or city for people walking. Together they can transform the way people move and experience a city, and improve everyone’s quality of life.

We are determined to work with city leaders, businesses and communities to improve our streets and cities for everyone, but we also hope our Blueprint will provide a useful tool for campaigners and walking advocates.

Download Our Blueprint For Change here: livingstreets.org.uk/walkingsummit
Our Walking Summit was a chance to bring together Living Streets supporters, members, partners and decision-makers. It was a huge success with over 250 attending and some fantastic speakers, our first being Janette Sadik-Khan, former New York City Transportation Commissioner.

Janette has been credited, along with the then Mayor Bloomberg, for transforming New York for people walking and cycling. She described her time as Commissioner and the everyday ‘Street Fight’ she had to go through in order to change the status quo and change New York’s streets and public spaces. She stressed the importance of strong political leadership, doing things quickly (often using paint and deck chairs) and the need for data (in Bloomberg’s words, ‘in God we trust, everyone else, bring data’).

Valerie Shawcross is a long-time champion for pedestrian-friendly streets and joined our conference back in 2015 as a London Assembly Member, so we were delighted to welcome her back in her new role as London’s Deputy Mayor for Transport and to hear about her ambitions for London. Val introduced London’s new Healthy Streets approach and stressed the role of walking at the heart of her vision for London’s streets and transportation. Val called on Living Streets supporters to keep banging the drum for walking in order to help her push through the ambitious plans she has for the Capital.
To support the next step in our Walking Cities campaign, we would really appreciate a small donation of £5 or whatever you can afford to help us in our campaign to create cities and towns designed around people not vehicles. Visit www.livingstreets.org.uk/donate

A real highlight was hearing from Will Norman, London’s new Walking and Cycling Commissioner. Will said it was great to be speaking at his first official event about walking - something he is passionate about. He mentioned that he feels walking had been undervalued in the recent policy debate and wants to make London the greatest city in the world for walking. Will talked about the ‘fairness’ of our current transport system - pointing out that those who suffer disproportionately from the negative impacts of road traffic are often the poorest and most vulnerable. A more walkable London would reduce health inequalities and improve the quality of life for all Londoners, he said.

Ben Still, Managing Director, West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Director of the Urban Transport Group asked us all to remember there was life outside the M25 (receiving a cheer from the crowd) and highlighted some of the fantastic programmes happening in places like Leeds to reprioritise streets away from the private car towards people walking, cycling and public transport. Ben outlined how devolution is already having a positive impact but explained that more is needed to allow bolder, more far-reaching transport interventions and better joined-up thinking between policies and transport, the economy and public health.

Riccardo Marini, Masterplanning and Urban Strategy Expert at Gehl Architects, spoke about the ‘Art of the Possible’. Riccardo gave a lively and thought-provoking presentation in which he challenged city leaders to be more ambitious, to create cities for everyone, and to prioritise people’s happiness above all else. In Riccardo’s words ‘I’m a human, cities are for us!’

These presenters gave us all much to discuss and conversation was sparked outside of the summit, with #WalkingSummit trending number 1 on Twitter in London. It was really inspiring to have such a huge, passionate audience and we were overwhelmed by the enthusiasm, ideas and support for Walking Cities.

The videos and presentations from the day are now available on our website and I’d urge anyone to go and have a watch: www.livingstreets.org.uk/walkingsummit
A DAY IN THE LIFE OF ... A PROJECT COORDINATOR

What are you currently working on?
I’m coordinating a project as part of the Age Better programme in Sheffield, which aims to reduce social isolation amongst people aged over 50. I’m working largely with older people in two wards of Sheffield, looking at barriers to walking and leading friendly, fun local walks to get people out and about in their communities.

What’s a typical day like?
No two days are alike. One day I’m having lovely chats about walking with a women’s group in Burngreave and the next I’m meeting a knitting group in Norwood and Bishopsholme to discuss plans for an audit. I’ve been to tea dances, Christmas fairs and doctor’s surgeries! Occasionally I spend some time in the office too as there’s a lot of data to keep on top of.

What’s your favourite local walk?
I love urban walks. My favourite walk is through Nether Edge – a lovely, leafy neighbourhood with huge lime trees and enormous Victorian houses. I’ve seen owls, badgers and foxes walking through this neighbourhood, even though it’s in the heart of the city.

What been the best thing about the project so far?
I’ve really enjoyed enabling people to have their voices heard. Streets and pavements are really tricky to negotiate for a lot of older people, especially those with mobility issues and I like to feel like I’m helping to work towards a solution.

Annie Russell
Joining the Idling Action London task force to ask idling drivers to turn off their engines.

Lots of pledges to go car-free in Cardiff.

Working with Beat the Street Birmingham to make the road more people-friendly.

Labelling great and not-so-great spots to walk with Age Better.

Promoting our Walk To programme at the Travelwest Business Travel Awards.

Strider on tour in Scotland to see some of our WOW schools.

BRISTOL

LONDON

CARDIFF

BIRMINGHAM

PERTH AND KINROSS

SHEFFIELD
FINDING POETRY IN THE PAVEMENTS

Our annual Charles Maher award recognises an individual or group that’s made a real difference to their local streets. This year’s winner has been doing just that in Manchester.

Morag Rose has been leading the Loiterers Resistance Movement (the LRM) and championing walking on the streets of Manchester and elsewhere for over 10 years. We were thrilled to present Morag with the award, set up in honour of Charles Maher, a longstanding supporter of Living Streets.

Morag is passionate about walking in the city and encouraging people to explore, enjoy and connect with their streets. The LRM is a Manchester-based collective of artists, activists and urban wanderers interested in psychogeography, public space and the hidden stories of the city. For their 10th anniversary they held an exhibition at the People’s History Museum: Loitering With Intent: The Art and Politics of Walking. Through shows, dramas and music, it lifted the hearts of 25,000 people.

Morag Rose is the leading light in the Loiterers Resistance Movement and the judges thought her to be ‘inspiring, imaginative, energetic, unorthodox and a little bit bolshy’.

Morag received multiple nominations, with one saying “(Morag) speaks passionately about disabled access and the architecture of exclusion. She’ll champion the rights of wheelchair users, telling you that walking can involve wheels as well as feet, but she also does much to recognise other less visible types of disability, disadvantage or discrimination that prevent people from enjoying access to the streets.”

We were thrilled to welcome Morag Rose to the Walking Summit to receive her award, upon which she spoke of finding poetry in the pavements, and thanked everyone who has wandered with the LRM over the years.

Congratulations also go to the Walking For Health team from Wincanton who picked up a commendation at this year’s awards.

“I believe the streets belong to everyone and walking together is a great way to explore, connect with, and make new maps of Manchester. The LRM is about creative mischief and revolutionary fun; we play games like CCTV Bingo, build giant cake maps and go for walks guided by dice, playing cards or friends all over the world. We welcome anyone to join us for a drift and to help us find the magic in the Mancunian rain.” – Morag Rose, Charles Maher Award winner
Christine Mabey first got involved with Living Streets when we were still the Pedestrians Association. Horrified at how bad local pavements and crossings were she contacted Ben Plowden, our then-Chief Executive and joined up. Realising there was strength in numbers, Christine asked a fellow member, Gillian Comins, to set up an Islington local group with her. They were soon joined by other concerned residents.

It was back in 2003 that Christine first started this particular campaign when she organised a day lobbying people crossing the dangerous junction on Leigh Road. Nearly everyone was happy to stop and fill in the questionnaire with 75% saying they wanted a zebra crossing. The council officers and members refused.

The group continued to raise the issue and joined with Highbury Fields School to petition the council, gathering thousands of signatures in support of the crossing over the years.

More recently the Islington Living Streets Group, led by Caroline Russell, started a new campaign. This time, with support from ward councillors, the council agreed.

The zebra crossing is part of a series of road improvement works funded by Transport for London, including a remodelled bus stand to protect pedestrians at the busy junction.

The new crossing might have been 14 years in the making, but now that it’s in place it will improve safety for all those walking to Highbury Fields and nearby shops and businesses, plus children at the local school and nurseries.

Christine joined Caroline and other residents and campaigners as the crossing was unveiled in March this year.

“I’ve waited 14 years but the old adage is right – if at first you don’t succeed, try, try again.”

“I am pleased to see the work has paid off. The improvements to the bus stand and the new zebra crossing now make this complicated area more pedestrian-friendly, safer and more enjoyable for all.” Cllr Claudia Webbe, Islington Council’s Executive Member for Environment & Transport
HAS PAVEMENT PARKING STALLED?

Back in 2015 a private member’s bill to prevent people from parking on pavements was taken to the UK Parliament. What’s happened since?

Parking on footways creates an issue for everyone trying to use the pavement but is especially dangerous for those with mobility issues, parents with pushchairs and older people; forcing them into the road and into the path of oncoming traffic.

Back in 2015, together with the Guide Dogs, we worked with Simon Hoare MP to sponsor a private member’s bill which would prevent people from parking on pavements, except in places exempted by the council. This is how the law currently operates in London and we’d like to see that extended everywhere.

Thanks to our campaigning, the Government agreed this was a really important issue and asked us to withdraw the bill so that they could conduct their own research into the best way forward. Following that, we were part of a roundtable chaired by Transport Minister, Andrew Jones and were told the Department for Transport would conduct their research and report back.

In March this year, the Local Government Association, which represents more than 370 councils in England and Wales, called for the laws allowing local authorities to ban pavement parking in London to be rolled out, saying councils need extra flexibility to introduce bans if needed.

We kept up the pressure and in April 2017 it looked like the Government was ready to act. They promised to review the process of making traffic regulation orders later in the year. This is with a view to making it easier and quicker for councils to ban pavement parking. Currently local authorities have to use traffic regulation orders (TROs) to ban pavement parking on certain roads; but it is a time-consuming, expensive and bureaucratic process.

Living Streets believes the law on pavement parking needs to be simplified - only allowing parking on pavements that have been specially designated to allow it, making it the exception rather than the rule. We fully support more powers being given to local authorities to make this a reality. Following the 2017 general election we’ll be making sure that new government keeps to its promises to review TROs and bring forward new legislation.

Scotland is closer to banning pavement parking

Holyrood was given devolved powers from Westminster last year and on 31 March this year opened its Improving Parking in Scotland consultation. Living Streets Scotland is urging people to have their say on pavement parking before the consultation ends on 30 June 2017.

A complete ban would make streets more accessible to all, ensure illegal footway parking could be easily enforced and only allow footway parking in areas where it has been defined necessary.

Effective and clear laws on footway and drop kerb parking will help people to walk more, especially the less confident and able. The consultation proposals will also help to tackle the scourge of double parking, reducing congestion and ensuring safe access for emergency services.

Living Streets Scotland has set up an online action for people to show their support for banning footway parking. This can be found on the Living Streets website: livingstreets.org.uk/scotland
@BrightKidz
Love how happy and proud they are; Class1Vale @chadvaleprimary are #walktoschool trophy winners. @livingstreets

@GeorgeMonbiot
Let’s get all schools linked up with @livingstreets, so that our kids no longer arrive and leave in a cloud of diesel fumes.

Get involved at NICE @NICEGetInvolved
Susie & Rachel from @livingstreets talking about how they engage with us and benefit from our resources #introNICE

Chris Taylor @cchris_taylor1
Congrats to @Media_Trust winning Silver EVCOM Clarion Award for the amazing @livingstreets Talking Shoes video

Jennifer Ryan @jennifer_lo
@livingstreets thanks for hosting and excellent WalkingSummit event! Lots of ideas and information materials to create #HealthyStreets

Cycling UK @WeAreCyclingUK
We wrote to @guardian w/ @livingstreets & @sustrans we’d like unallocated #SugarTax funds used for active travel

@candidaj
After years of campaigning #Wandsworth’s 20mph limit finally here thanks to @SadiqKhan @CllrFleur @livingstreets wandsworthguardian.co.uk/news/15168362

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RATE YOUR WALK

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