

# Geared UP!

Promoting walking and cycling to improve the health, wellbeing, and local economy of

**Northumberland**





“A vision for walking and cycling in Northumberland”

# Northumberland should be synonymous with walking and cycling:



A combination of increasingly pedestrian and cycle friendly towns; an extensive network of “quiet lanes”; and a substantial system of off-road routes readily offer residents and visitors the opportunity to walk or pedal in the county whether to commute, relax, work up a sweat, or access local facilities and attractions.

But with only 13% of all journeys made on foot or by bike, Northumberland is currently missing this potential – particularly as a third of all trips made in the county cover a distance of less than 5 kilometres.

This Prospectus sets out Northumberland’s ambition to encourage more people of all ages and circumstances to walk and cycle more often, to help the economy, create jobs, improve health and welfare, promote social inclusion and improve the environment.

We have a vision that Northumberland will deliver a high quality, safe walking and cycling experience to be enjoyed by increasing numbers of residents, businesses and visitors.





# Why bother?

A primary objective of this Prospectus is to secure long-term and year-on-year investment for walking and cycling in Northumberland as part of a broader integrated economic regeneration, education and health and wellbeing strategy.

The starting point for this is to demonstrate the return that such an investment will reap.

Specifically, by engaging from an early age, sustainable travel habits become engrained leading to long term health benefits.



Ten reasons for investing in, and promoting walking and cycling

## **Create jobs**

Mobile talent moves to places with excellent walking and cycling provision, helping close the skills gap and attract high value business.

## **Inject money directly into the economy**

Walking and cycling also directly generates employment, particularly in tourism and retail. Walkers and cyclists buy local products, visit local attractions and use local assets such as cafes, pubs, and guest houses

## **Save employers money and improve productivity**

Walking and cycling reduces sickness absenteeism at work. Cycling to work, for example, can halve the number of sick days we take.

## **Boost the vitality of town centres**

Walkers and cyclists spend more on shopping trips than car drivers

## **Improve public health and save NHS money**

Walkers and cyclists have better health and wellbeing, utilise less health and welfare support and are more likely to live well and for longer

## **Reduce congestion**

Walking and cycling reduces both traffic levels and travel times, particularly as it also leads to greater use of public transport

## **Reduce pollution**

Walking and cycling does not produce noxious fumes, nor is it noisy

## **Improve liveability**

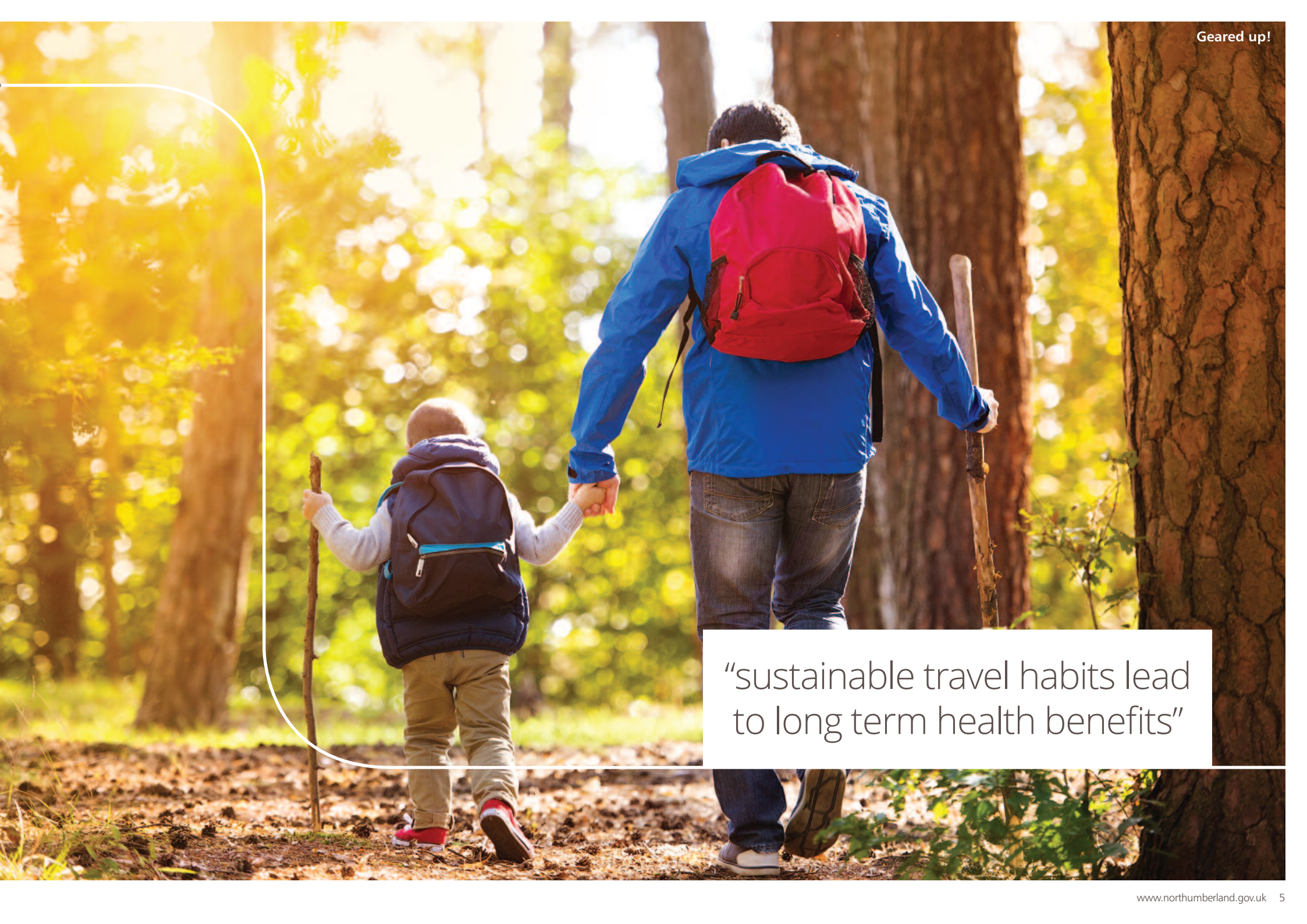
Walking and cycling creates a more pleasant environment and reduces the fear of crime

## **Enhance family and community life**

Walking and cycling is sociable and fun

## **Promote social inclusion**

Walking and cycling is inexpensive and can be accessed by people of all ages and abilities directly from their home to their destination.



“sustainable travel habits lead to long term health benefits”



# All about the experience

Any action an individual takes reflects the sum combination of motivating factors. In relation to walking and cycling these can be described as pull factors reflecting the lifestyle choices that voluntarily persuade individuals why walking and cycling is for them, and push factors relating to creating the right conditions so that more individuals are persuaded that walking and cycling is a realistic option for them.



## PUSH

It's safe It's convenient  
It's easy to find my way  
It's fun



## PULL

It's faster. It's healthy.  
It's inexpensive.  
It's green.

“Walking and cycling is inexpensive and can be accessed by people of all ages and abilities directly from their home to their destination”



The push factors are all about delivering **a quality experience.** This is central to the vision for Northumberland.

# The vision for walking and cycling in Northumberland

Northumberland will deliver a high quality, safe walking and cycling experience to be enjoyed by increasing numbers of residents, businesses and visitors, which will contribute to the improvement of health, wellbeing, and the local economy of the county. There will be a particular focus on increasing walking and cycling participation by children and young people



Different types of walking and cycling conjure different definitions and expectations of a 'quality' experience.

## Family

"We want access to car-free, circular routes on relatively easy terrain within country park settings which have rest facilities and refreshments"

## Pastime

"We want access to a range of off-road hiking and biking routes to suit different abilities and accommodate alternative weather scenarios"

## Endurance

"We want access to quality, long-distance routes that are easy to navigate and served with walker and cyclist friendly places to stay"

## Utility

"We want access to safe and convenient urban routes to school, work, key services, and public transport hubs"

## Sport

"We want access to a network of quiet lanes with good surfaces that allow us to run and cycle to maintain our fitness"

*Individuals may progress through these user categories as their confidence and enjoyment increases. Equally, some individuals will sit within more than one of the user categories.*

# Our track record

## Go Smarter Northumberland

This initiative has been delivering a comprehensive range of active and sustainable travel projects since 2012.

It has supported both individuals in employment and seeking employment by delivering a range of support and initiatives to encourage sustainable forms of transport, including walking and cycling initiatives.

It has also worked with local schools to deliver a “whole school” approach to promote active and sustainable travel transport for the school journey – with a particular emphasis on keeping safe when cycling and scooting to school.

In addition, Go Smarter has provided nearly 300 new cycle parking spaces; delivered almost 500 bicycle maintenance services and classes and 100 adult cycle skills sessions; and awarded bicycle loans to 200 individuals.

Over and above the on-going Go Smarter programme, Northumberland and its partners have been at the forefront when delivering a sustainable network through The National Cycle Network, world heritage walking trails, internationally renowned mountain biking, Connect2 in Bedlington and Blyth, Blyth Active Travel Town (the UK’s first) and the highly successful schools project ‘Bike It’.





## Case study 1

# Mickley First School

**Mickley First School is situated on the A695 at Mickley Square; a small village in the west of the county. Because of the rural position and the distances some pupils have to travel, a number have no choice but to come by car. However the road outside the school has limited parking with high volumes of traffic passing by including HGV's.**

The School has been working with the Go Smarter Team since 2012/13 and now takes part in all our initiatives, including Walk on Wednesdays, Walk to School Week and Bike Week. In recognition, the school received their bronze Modeshift STARS award at the Love Northumberland celebration event at Alnwick Gardens in September 2015.

The results of all of this positive activity can be seen in the increase in the number of pupils travelling sustainably to school, there are currently 55% of pupils walking to school (50% in 2011 census), 2% of pupils scooting to school (0% in 2011) and a decrease in the number of pupils coming to school by car 38% (45% in 2011).



'We encourage the children in our school to make healthy lifestyle choices. The children have a good understanding of the health benefits of regular exercise and we have seen the number of children walking, cycling or scooting to school increase over the last 3 years'

## Case study 2

# The Sandstone Way

**The Sandstone Way is a new 120 miles mountain biking route between Berwick upon Tweed and Hexham along the Sandstone Ridge in North Northumberland linking numerous sandstone features, crags and outcrops.**

The route traverses through an amazing ever-changing landscape while also linking numerous villages and small communities including Wooler, Rothbury and Bellingham.

The route has been designed for mountain bikers and appeals to all abilities. It uses a mix of existing rights of way of varied surfaces and widths interlinked by the minimum amount of quiet roads possible.

The project was seed funded by Northumberland National Park Authority, Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Sustainable Development Fund, Northumberland County Council, Tyne Valley Mountain Bike Club and the Rural Development Programme for England through the Northern Lands Project. The Cycle PaD (a social enterprise who manage this website), have supported the project from the outset.

Although only launched in 2015, local businesses along the route such as accommodation providers and cycle tour operators are already reporting on the positive benefits of the Sandstone Way through increased bookings and additional spend.



Cyclist on the Sandstone Way



### Case study 3

## National Walk at Work Week

**Every May Northumberland County Council promotes National Walk at Work Week. The campaign championed by Living Streets, a national charity aims to get employees thinking about active travel and uses the week to promote the benefits of walking at work.**

Walking can help lower blood pressure, protect against certain cancers and maintains muscle mass. It can also be a remedy for mental health illnesses. There is also a social element to walking if you involve your colleagues and can provide a sense of independence and self-confidence.

Other key messages from the campaign include personal cost benefits through savings on petrol or transport fees and the environmental impact of a carbon reduction through less motor vehicle on the roads.

Staff who take part are asked to complete a walking log for the week and submit this to the Public Health Team. They have the option to walk to work, walk during meetings, use their lunch to walk or walk between buildings where possible. The activity logs are drawn at random with the winner receiving a prize.





## Case study 4

# Active in Ashington

**Active in Ashington (AinA) was extremely successfully in increasing levels of physical activity and improving well-being in Ashington and Wansbeck. The project ran from 2009 to 2011 and targeted the unemployed and those with mental and physical health problems.**

The project helped 6,000 beneficiaries become more physically active and participants were found to have a decrease in bouts of depression and stress, increased confidence, and an increased opportunity to appreciate the natural environment

Funding was provided through the Big Lottery Well-being Fund, Northern Rock and the Northumberland NHS Care Trust until December 2011.

Amongst car owners car use was reduced by 50%. The largest change was seen in the amount of time participants spent walking and cycling which increased by over an hour a week.

The project loaned over 600 recycled bikes to individuals in order to access workplace training and job interviews, and many of the project's volunteers also went on to find full time jobs.



6,000 Beneficiaries



Walking  
and Cycling

Car owners' driving



Wellbeing  
improved

## Case study 5

# Bike Loans

**Lisa lives in Ashington and is a part-time Health Care worker at Wansbeck General Hospital.**

Lisa started cycling after Sustrans ran a local promotional event to encourage more staff to travel actively. Since taking up the offer of a loan bike Lisa lost 3 stone (19kg) in just 9 months. Her health, fitness and general wellbeing has improved greatly.

Lisa had been juggling getting to work with getting her two children up and ready for school. Riding to work has significantly cut down the time for her commute, making mornings much less stressful.

Lisa was so inspired that she saved up and bought herself a used bike when her Sustrans bike was returned. She now cycles as much as possible and travels everywhere by bike.

Since noticing the positive impact cycling has had on her life Lisa has encouraged her two children to take up cycling as well. Her son now rides his bike every day to Hirst Park Middle School. Lisa and her daughter do the shopping on bikes and the family now enjoy trips to the local park.



Ashington resident and Health Care Worker Lisa

## Case study 6

# Cycle Experience Northumberland Adult Cycle Skills

**As part of Go Smarter Northumberland, Cycle Experience has delivered cycling skills sessions with the aim of encouraging more adults to cycle more often. The sessions delivered training to around 50 adults at four different experience levels.**

The majority of applicants were ladies who had either not learned to cycle or who needed to boost their confidence and therefore entered as complete beginners or level 1. Two ladies who entered at complete beginner level progressed to a point where they tackled a 4 mile coastal route, something they never thought they'd be able to manage

At levels 2 and 3 there was a wider mixture of applicants who were seeking to improve their understanding of how cyclists and other road users should interact and in doing so tackle busier roads

Overall feedback from the applicants was very positive with many feeling they'd accomplished something they never thought they would and would not have done so without the training and encouragement provided by the adult cycle training sessions.



Learning skills sessions with Go Smarter Northumberland's Cycle Experience



## Case study 7

# Northumberland Market Town Improvements

Northumberland County Council and Sustrans are working together to improve walking and cycling facilities in 7 market towns across the County. Following a series of audits, key infrastructure improvements were recommended as part of a programme of schemes in Alnwick, Ashington, Berwick upon Tweed, Blyth, Cramlington, Hexham and Morpeth.

Essentially the market towns work has looked at:

- Improving access to the town centres on foot and bike
- Improving access to local amenities- schools, shops, employment, stations primarily
- Town centre 'experience'- public space improvements to encourage people to leave their cars at home and reduce the impact of cars in the centres.

Solutions/ schemes have ranged from cycle parking to town centre pedestrianisation. Work has begun in a number of towns including:

- Hexham – improved traffic free route from the station to the town centre.
- Morpeth – resurfaced traffic restricted access road that was extremely dilapidated but serves as a popular route from housing and industrial estates in south of town to the town centre and nearby school.
- Many schemes now completed design stage and are awaiting construction e.g. large scale cycle permeability area scheme in Blyth.



'Bike and Go' scheme in Hexham





“achieve the vision for walking and cycling in Northumberland”

# Leadership

It is clear that the promotion of walking and cycling as a basis for people to use their cars less and to exercise more is growing in prominence in Northumberland. However, there now needs to be a more concerted and unified effort to maximise the economic, health, environmental, and community gains to be made from more people choosing to regularly walk and cycle.

## **This is being led by the Northumberland Cycling and Walking Board.**

The Board brings together councillors and staff from across Northumberland County Council, with senior representatives from Sustrans, NHS England, Northumberland National Park, Northumberland Tourism, Active Northumberland, Kielder Water and Forest Park Development Trust.

It aims to:

- Drive forward plans and initiatives that create the right conditions to achieve the vision for walking and cycling in Northumberland
- Prioritise those projects that will have the greatest impact on health, wellbeing and the local economy, influencing the realignment of workstreams and resources
- Contribute to policy formulation and influence partners' plans relating to walking and cycling in Northumberland
- Develop strong partnership links between transport, health, safety, education, sustainability, planning, leisure and tourism to add value to plans and initiatives
- Act as a champion for active travel in Northumberland, providing a combined voice to influence the profile of, and investment in walking and cycling
- Regularly review the work of the Board and identify issues which may need a collective approach to resolve
- Seek out and learn from examples of best practice elsewhere
- Collect evidence on the benefits of walking and cycling and share this with partners and stakeholders



# Investment and Value for Money

This leadership needs to be underpinned by an ongoing commitment to proactively invest in walking and cycling – both in terms of improving and expanding cycling infrastructure which largely requires capital investment (“the hardware”) and in providing the right mix of branding, marketing, information, and training which largely requires revenue investment (“the software”).

The ambition of the Cycling and Walking Board is to secure, by 2020, an average and tangible annual allocation of **£5 million** for walking and cycling in Northumberland. This would equate to approximately **£15 per resident per year**.

This represents a significant leap from the current levels of funding devoted annually to walking and cycling and as such will require the County Council and its local partners to find creative ways to contribute and “stretch” more and more of their existing resources that go beyond “normal” maintenance programmes. The financial support of the Government, either directly or through the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (NELEP) or the North East Combined Authority (NECA), will also be needed to assist in unlocking this ongoing and sustained investment.

In return for this investment, the Board would seek to attain a number of “added value” and quantifiable outcomes.

## The aspiration for 2025

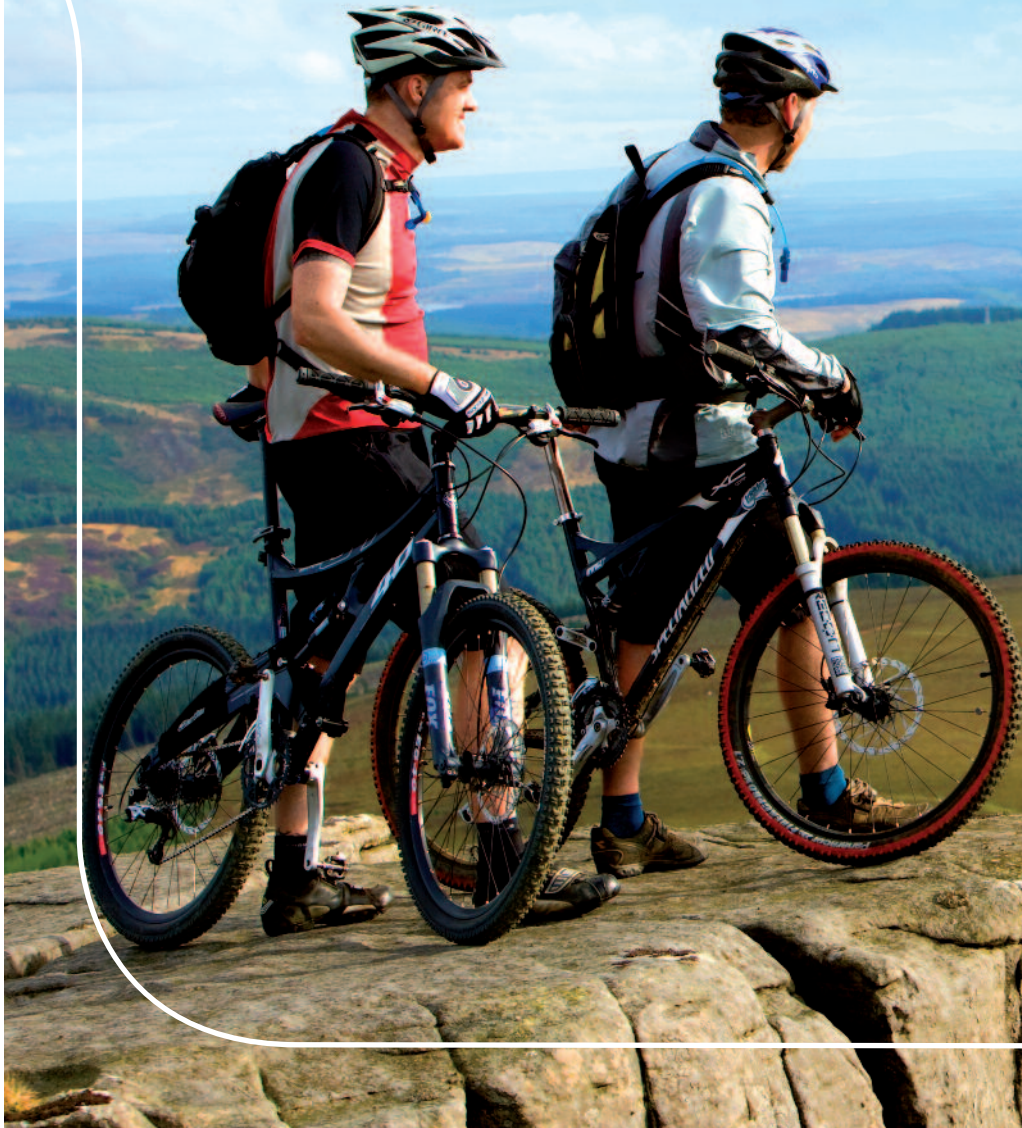
- To deliver a 5 star cycle and walking experience enjoyed by increasing numbers of visitors as well as our own residents.
- The majority of journeys in Northumberland under a mile will be walked and under 5 miles will be cycled.
- Northumberland will invest heavily in the redesign of its town and communities to make walking and cycling the preferred mode of travel for all short journeys and to attract inward investment from businesses prioritising ‘liveability’.
- Northumberland will have the highest levels of active travel to work, the healthiest workforce and lowest levels of absenteeism in the UK.
- Northumberland will have the highest levels of active travel to school and the lowest school run congestion in the UK.
- Northumberland will be the most walked and cycled tourist destination in the UK.

It is considered that given the anticipated level of investment, this approach represents considerable value for money – particularly as the fulfilment of these targets will also generate major savings to NHS and welfare spend.



'generate major savings to  
NHS and welfare spend'





“the value of investing in walking and cycling”



# Getting Geared Up

In order to illustrate the value of investing in walking and cycling – and assist in securing a long-term commitment to its promotion – the Board has identified five strategic demonstration programmes that it will progressively aim to deliver and extensively promote over the next two to three years.

## “Follow the Red and Yellow Jersey”

This Programme is geared at inspiring everyone in the county as to the pleasures and benefits of cycling. This will involve building on the legacy of the hosting of two stages of the Tour of Britain 2015 substantially within Northumberland as the basis for all manner of cultural and creative activity as well as promoting greater cycle participation.

## “Boot and Spoke Friendly”

This Programme is geared at encouraging more and more local businesses to positively welcome walkers and cyclists. This will involve developing and promoting a county accreditation for shops, cafes, public houses and accommodation providers who have taken tangible steps to attract patronage from walkers and cyclists.

## “Sustainable Towns”

This Programme is geared at enhancing the pedestrian and cycling environment in all our main towns. This will involve improving junctions; inserting dedicated lanes; reducing speed limits; educating drivers, supplying secure parking; providing information and advice; and holding regular events and promotions (particularly within schools).

## “Active Towns”

This partnership programme is taking a cumulative approach, starting with small measures targeting a particular community. These include refreshed signage for existing pathways, school-based initiatives such as ‘mileaday’ and promotional activities. An initial focus on Cramlington can be rolled out county wide.

## “Quality Ways”

This Programme is geared at enhancing the quality and usability of the county’s network of premier long distance routes. This will involve comprehensively signing and way-marking the routes; improving particular trouble-spots or gaps; proactively maintaining the prioritised routes; and developing new products that allow sustainable use of the network.

**For more information please visit:**

For information about popular cycling routes within and just outside Northumberland:

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Highways/Cycling.aspx#cyclinginandaroundnorthumberland>

Active Northumberland manage leisure facilities on behalf of Northumberland County Council:

<http://www.activenorthumberland.org.uk/>

Sustrans works with communities, policy-makers and partner organisations so that people can choose healthier, cleaner and cheaper journeys:

<http://www.sustrans.org.uk/>

Kielder Water & Forest Park is home to the biggest man-made lake in Northern Europe and, at over 250 square miles, the largest working forest in England. The park hosts the largest network of off-road cycle/mountain bike trails in England at over 160km:

<http://www.visitkielder.com/>

Northumberland National Park is the northernmost national park in England:

<http://www.northumberlandnationalpark.org.uk/>

Northumberland Tourism is the destination management organisation for Northumberland:

<http://northumberlandtourism.org.uk/>

<http://www.visitnorthumberland.com/>

Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group:

<http://www.northumberlandccg.nhs.uk/>

The Sandstone Way is a new 120 miles mountain biking route between Berwick upon Tweed and Hexham along the Sandstone Ridge in North Northumberland:

<http://sandstoneway.co.uk/>





Partners

