



Northumberland  
County Council

# Our Way

Walking and Cycling  
in Northumberland



Northumberland Cycling and Walking Board  
June 2020

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## “A VISION FOR WALKING AND CYCLING IN NORTHUMBERLAND”



# INTRODUCTION

## "NORTHUMBERLAND SHOULD BE SYNONYMOUS WITH WALKING AND CYCLING"

With an aspiration for pedestrian and cycle friendly towns; an extensive network of quiet lanes; and a substantial system of off-road routes will 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.

'Our Way' 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 well-being, 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. We will achieve this vision by working with our partners, combining our efforts to maximise the economic, health, environmental and community benefits to be gained. Along with our partners we will go beyond our existing resources, with an ambition of an annual allocation of £5million for walking and cycling in Northumberland by 2020.





# 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.



### Boost the vitality of town centres

Walkers and cyclists spend more on shopping trips than car drivers.



### Reduce pollution

Walking and cycling reduce carbon dioxide emissions and does not produce noxious fumes, nor is it noisy.



### 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.



### Improve liveability

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



### 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.



### Reduce congestion

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



### 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"**





# STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The Corporate Plan (2018-21) outlines our commitment that residents are able to feel safe and enjoy a long and healthy life; that the vibrancy of the town centres and the unique characteristics of the county is protected and enhanced. We will ensure connectivity to work, learning and services and create the right conditions to support economic growth; supporting and promoting greater levels of walking and cycling will enable us to deliver our commitments.

The government's ambition to make walking and cycling a natural choice for shorter journeys is outlined in the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS). The CWIS outlines the requirement for local authorities to develop Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans. The Northumberland Local Transport plan, Local Plan and associated strategies seek to ensure we deliver a high quality, safe walking and cycling experience to be enjoyed by increasing numbers of residents, businesses and visitors that will help us to reduce carbon emissions and improve local air quality.

Supporting sustainable transport solutions is outlined in the economic vision of the North of Tyne Combined Authority and walking and cycling will be supported through the Borderlands Growth Deal. Enhancement of our walking and cycling offer will support our culture and tourism sector as outlined in the Northumberland Economic Strategy (2019-2024), the Northumberland Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Northumberland Physical Activity Strategy.



# VISION

## "WE WANT MORE PEOPLE TO WALK AND CYCLE MORE OFTEN"

Northumberland will deliver a high quality, safe walking and cycling experience to be enjoyed by increasing numbers of residents, businesses and visitors. We want more people to walk and cycle to get to places of work, education and for leisure. Walking and cycling will be normal activities for most people, most of the time, using routes that are safe, direct, convenient and pleasant. Northumberland will be a national and international destination for outdoor recreation. Supporting walking and cycling 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"

### ACTIVE RECREATION

"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.*



# 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, Northumberland Sport, Kielder Water and Forest Park Development Trust, Northumberland Sport, Forestry England and Natural England.

### **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





## "ACHIEVE THE VISION FOR WALKING AND CYCLING IN NORTHUMBERLAND"



# 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 of Tyne Combined Authority, will also be needed to assist in unlocking this ongoing and sustained investment.



## "GENERATE MAJOR SAVINGS TO NHS AND WELFARE SPEND"

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 it's 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.

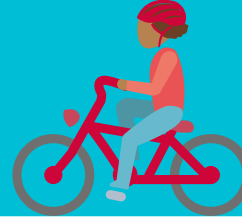




# GOALS

**"THE VALUE OF INVESTING  
IN WALKING AND CYCLING"**





## GOAL 1 SUSTAINABLE TOWNS

We will enhance the pedestrian and cycling environment in all our main towns. We will strive to create walking and cycling networks that are joined-up, safe, attractive and accessible to all, making walking and cycling the natural choice for short journeys. We will produce Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans for each of our main towns, creating a series of cycling hubs across the county. These will enable a long-term approach to the development of high quality walking and cycling networks and ensure investment is targeted to support a change in how we travel. Routes will be clearly signed and well integrated with public transport, we will review cycle parking needs in urban areas and work closely with partners to improve facilities at important trip destinations.

## GOAL 2 ACTIVE PLACE

We will work with communities, businesses and schools to support walking and cycling through established projects such as Go Smarter; supporting travel planning and marketing initiatives to increase the uptake of sustainable travel options, reducing private vehicles use and promoting the health related benefits of active travel. We will continue to support Bikeability within schools and offer bicycle maintenance and bike leader training to school staff supporting a 'whole school' approach. We will support cycling as a leisure activity and encourage families to become more active and support initiatives such as 'mileaday' and health walks. We will work with new developments, both housing and employment, ensuring developments incorporate cycling and walking infrastructure and facilitate and promote sustainable transport.



## GOAL 3 QUALITY WAYS

We will enhance the quality and usability of the county's network of recreation and long distance routes, establishing Northumberland as a national and international destination for outdoor recreation. We will provide safe walking and cycling routes to allow families to be more active together and provide links to where people want to go, including visitor attractions, country parks and other recreational areas. This will involve comprehensively signing and way-marking the routes; improving particular trouble-spots or gaps, proactively maintaining the prioritised routes and seeking funding to develop new products that allow sustainable use of the network. We will use the development of our routes to stimulate private investment in the development of associated visitor infrastructure.



## GOAL 4 INSPIRATION AND SUPPORT

We will inspire and support greater participation in cycling and walking, we will build on the legacy of the Tour of Britain 2019 and other events, ensuring local businesses and attractions become positive advocates for walking and cycling. We will raise the profile of walking and cycling, residents and visitors alike will be encouraged to use our comprehensive networks, supported by high quality information services, with local businesses and services geared up to welcome walkers and cyclists.



## CONTACT US

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### PARTNERS



**Northumberland**  
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