



Living Streets, the UK charity for everyday walking

Our mission is to achieve a better walking environment and inspire people to walk more local, everyday journeys. We do this through campaigning for change (a ban on pavement parking, default 20mph speed limit on urban roads, better crossings) and by delivering change to communities across the UK.

Include brief information on your local group (history, aims, any achievements)

The benefits of walking

The following section provides evidence on how increased walking rates can boost our economy, health and climate. Research demonstrates the difficulty of encouraging modal shift and breaking entrenched habits, so it is vital that investment prioritises not only capital but also revenue funding. Behaviour change initiatives play a key role in producing better outcomes for our health and environment, lowering air pollution and breaking well-established habits. This was highlighted in a recent report by the House of Lords Environment and Climate Change Committee.¹

Economy

Investment in active travel delivers significant benefits to the economy.

Pound for pound, investing in active travel makes sense. Shifting investment from cars to more sustainable modes of transport delivers a high return on investment, the Department for Transport estimate this to be at least £4.50 for every £1 invested.² Active travel contributed an estimated £36.5 billion to the UK economy in 2021, with

¹ House of Lords Environment and Climate Change Committee, In our hands: behaviour change for climate and environmental goals (November 2022).

² Department for Transport, Investing in Cycling and Walking, <
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/877511/cycling-and-walking-business-case-summary.pdf>.

a relatively modest investment from government when compared to other transport modes.²

Our [Pedestrian Pound](#) report shows how investment in walking brings benefits to the high street. Investing in better walking environments increases high street footfall and can boost retail sales by 30% or more.³

Congestion costs the economy. In 2019, British people wasted 115 hours in congestion, costing the country £6.9 billion, an average of £894 per driver.⁴ There are a number of ways to encourage the modal shift needed to lower this figure. Please see the above information on investment on investment in both infrastructure and behaviour change initiatives as a means to reach walking targets.

Health & Climate

Walking can cut emissions & combat physical inactivity. This can contribute significantly to transport decarbonisation, while creating a healthier population less reliant on the NHS.

According to the Chief Medical Officer, “if physical activity were a drug, we would refer to it as a miracle cure”.⁵ Road transport is the largest contributor to poor air quality, and the health problems this inflicts disproportionately affects ethnic minorities and communities marginalised by deprivation.⁶ Living Streets’ ‘is walking a miracle cure?’ [report](#) dives into this further.

People walking, wheeling and cycling took 14.6 million cars off the road in 2021. This saved 2.5 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions, prevented 138,000 serious long-term health conditions and avoided more than 29,000 early deaths.⁷

According to modelling used in Public Health England’s air pollution project, the total cost of PM2.5 and NO2 combined between 2017 and 2025 is estimated to be £1.6 billion and total health costs resulting from air pollution range between £8.5 billion and £20.2 billion a year. It has been calculated that the health benefits of increased walking and cycling could save the NHS £17 billion over a 20-year period (2012-31).⁸

Capital investment in footway maintenance can combat physical inactivity and social isolation, while delivering a return on investment to the government.

The need for infrastructure investment is a live issue after the Transport Secretary recently announced that active travel funding for the current parliamentary term in England is being reduced from £3.8 billion to £3 billion. This includes a two thirds cut to capital funding, from £308 million to only £100 million for the next two years.

³ Living Streets, Pedestrian Pound, p.23.

⁴ [INRIX Global Traffic Scorecard: Congestion cost UK economy £6.9 billion in 2019 - INRIX](#)

⁵ Department for Health and Social Care, ‘[UK Chief Medical Officers’ Physical Activity Guidelines’ \(2019\), 3.](#)

⁶ Sam Wong, [Ethnic minorities and deprived communities hardest hit by air pollution](#) (Imperial College London, 2015).

⁷ Sustrans. [Walking and Cycling Index 2021.](#)

⁸ [Health Matters: Air pollution – sources, impacts and actions - Public health matters \(blog.gov.uk\)](#)

YouGov polling commissioned by Living Streets found that 48% of adults over 65 would walk more if pavements were better maintained, meaning that a lack of investment in footway maintenance contributes to physical inactivity and social isolation.

Poorly maintained footways also cause pedestrian falls. Living Streets' [recently published report](#) found that between health and social care costs for the NHS, and personal injury claims brought forward against local authorities, pedestrian falls may cost government as much as £500 million annually.

These figures show a clear case for investment in pavement infrastructure. Between 2019 - 2021, a comprehensive assessment of the nation's footways was carried out by Gaist on behalf of the Department of Transport (DfT). They estimated an average total cost 'of all maintenance operations that would need to be carried out to either address poor condition on a footway or to preserve the footway in its current condition and prevent further deterioration' in England (excluding London) of £1.695bn. Our research suggests that this investment would be returned within the length of a parliament.

How do we meet walking targets?

This section provides a brief overview of the steps required to meet walking targets, with links to useful resources to find further information.

- Living Streets calls for infrastructure improvements to increase walking rates, such as **better crossings, well-maintained pavements, 20mph zones, and school streets**. Research has shown that after 30 seconds pedestrians are more likely to risk crossing the road before signals change, and more than one in four people would walk more on their local streets if there were more and better crossings. Campaigners in London successfully worked with Transport for London to reduce unnecessary wait times, see [here](#) for more on our better crossings campaign. 20mph zones are also proven to increase active travel rates, over a third of residents in Portsmouth reported an increase in pedestrian activity since the introduction of 20mph zones. See [here](#) for more on 20mph and [here](#) for more on school streets.
- To maximise return on investment, walking infrastructure investments must be guided by a grounded understanding of communities' experience of the barriers to walking in their area. This could be done by **expanding our successful programme of [Community Street Audits](#)** as an integrated element of local consultation processes preceding infrastructure change.
- Achieving **walk to school targets** will be a major part of achieving general targets, especially if the focus is expanded beyond primary schools to target secondary and post-secondary education settings. Expanding Living Streets' [WOW programme](#) would help achieve this, our flagship behaviour change scheme has amazing results – on average WOW schools see a 30% reduction in car journeys taken to the school gates and a 23% increase in walking rates.

- To encourage people to build walking habits, and to first experience any new or improved infrastructure, **behaviour change interventions in workplaces like our [Walking Works](#) initiative** will be important.
- Meeting targets will also require **excellent integration with public transport**. With better public transport links and more frequent services, walking can be promoted as one stage of a wider bus or train trip that have otherwise been driven. This is particularly important to promote walking in rural areas. Further detail on improving public transport can be found on the Low Traffic Future Alliance website [here](#).
- To ensure we create walking-friendly neighbourhoods in the first instance, **we should promote better planning with health & wellbeing at its core**. Research shows that people are generally happy to walk for 20 minutes¹ to get to and from the places they need to go and 65% of UK adults agree that people should be able to meet most of their everyday needs within a 20-minute walk of their home.² Creating places with amenities close at hand and a variety of types of housing will increase physical activity, reduce pollution and combat isolation. See the briefing [here](#) (under health & wellbeing) on how better planning can encourage modal shift.

Pavement Parking

The following section provides an overview on pavement parking. It outlines why pavement parking is a problem and the steps that ought to be taken to fix it. We would encourage you to petition for further powers to enforce pavement parking in the region and publicly support our campaign for a nationwide legislative ban.

The problem

Pavements are for people to walk on - so of course parking on pavements is a major concern for our supporters and the general public.

Vehicles parked on the footway can cause an obstruction and inhibit the independence of many vulnerable people, especially older or disabled people with visual or mobility impairments. YouGov polling commissioned by Living Streets found that 62% of adults over 65 in England were worried about obstructions on the pavement.

Every day, parents and children are putting themselves at risk because of pavement parking. Polling commissioned by Living Streets indicates that 87% of parents have had to walk into the road because of pavement parking and that 80% would be more likely to walk their child to school if there wasn't pavement parking. Moreover, a Living Streets FOI request (2018) found that 93% of local authorities in England have received complaints from members of the public about pavement parking.

Driving onto and parking on the pavement also damages the pavement over time, which can create tripping hazards for pedestrians when the vehicle is not there. Our research has found that 48% of adults over 65 would walk more if pavements were

better maintained, meaning that damage to the footway contributes to physical inactivity and social isolation.

What can be done?

We were pleased to support the Government's consultation that closed in November 2020 on managing pavement parking; an amazing 7,455 people supported our campaign and submitted evidence. **Over two years later, we are still waiting for the government to respond to the consultation.**

This unprecedented delay has been followed by the news that the Transport Bill will be delayed for the foreseeable future, and with it a nationwide, legislative ban on pavement parking.

We welcomed the nationwide ban on pavement parking in Scotland announced in 2019. Between Covid-19 and concerns over the breadth of exemptions councils are allowed to make, implementation of the ban has been delayed. Living Streets Scotland is working hard to ensure the Scottish Government gets the ban right. In Wales, the Welsh Government has proposed changes that will allow local authorities to enforce against pavement parking where it is causing an unnecessary obstruction to people on the pavement. We are calling on the government to not leave England behind – it is time for a legislative ban on pavement parking in England.

Any ban should allow for local authorities to exempt certain streets, but from the starting point that pavement parking is banned by default, rather than the free for all we have at present. A legislative ban should also be accompanied by an awareness raising campaign highlighting the damage and distress caused by anti-social pavement parking.

At present, parking on pavements is partly covered by both criminal and civil law and a YouGov poll commissioned by Guide Dogs found only 5% of drivers understood the law in this area. A legislative ban would provide a clear signal to drivers not to park in the footway, minimising confusion and giving pavements back to pedestrians.

We are calling on the government to publish the long overdue response to the pavement parking consultation, and at the same time make it easier for local authorities to take action in their areas by introducing civil parking enforcement powers to enforce against 'unnecessary obstruction of the pavement'. This should be followed swiftly by clear action in the form of a legislative ban as soon as parliamentary time allows.

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