

# Getting more people into walking and cycling is...

## better for health

People who are physically active live longer, healthier lives. **Exercise can help prevent or treat more than 12 different health conditions**, from type II diabetes, heart disease, cancer, depression, and dementia - no wonder it's been described as a 'miracle cure' by the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges.<sup>1</sup>

In Scotland, one-third of adults and one-quarter of children don't get recommended levels of physical activity.<sup>2</sup> **Our sedentary lifestyles cost NHS Scotland over £94 million per year** - that's an average of £18 per person per year.<sup>3</sup>

**Walking and cycling are among the easiest ways to be more active**, because they are cheap, convenient, and can be incorporated into daily life.

**The biggest health benefits are seen when the least active people become moderately active.**<sup>1</sup> New evidence is emerging that this is exactly the group who are most likely to benefit from better infrastructure for walking and cycling.<sup>4,5</sup>

#walkcyclevote

## better for the environment

Replacing car journeys with active travel is one of the best ways of reducing our individual contributions to climate change. **Road transport accounts for more than 20% of Scotland's CO2 output.**<sup>6</sup>

**Someone making the average UK commute of 4 miles could save half a tonne of CO2 per year by switching from driving to cycling** - that's 6% of the average person's annual carbon footprint.<sup>7</sup>

Increasing active travel also reduces air pollution and traffic noise, making communities more pleasant places to live. Even **small shifts towards active travel can have a big impact on congestion.** One study in the US found that reducing traffic by 1% at peak periods can reduce travel time for all by 14-18%.<sup>8</sup>



## better for the economy

Investing in walking and cycling makes good financial sense. 'Return on investment' in this area can be huge: **every £1 spent on active travel yields an average of £13 to £19 of benefits.**<sup>9</sup> In contrast, most road schemes provide £2 or less for every £1 spent.

More liveable urban environments are also good for the local economy, due to increased footfall and passing trade. Several studies in the UK and other countries have found that **people travelling by foot or by bike tend to spend significantly more at local shops** per week than those travelling by car.<sup>10</sup> In rural areas, cycling and walking can attract significant tourist income.<sup>11</sup>

1. Exercise: <http://www.aomrc.org.uk/publications/reports-guidance/exercise-the-miracle-cure-0215/>  
2. <http://www.scotpho.org.uk/behaviour/physical-activity/key-points>  
3. <http://www.healthscotland.com/documents/6262.aspx>  
4. <https://www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk/phr/phr04010#/abstract>  
5. [http://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/6007/Active\\_travel\\_synthesis\\_final.pdf](http://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/6007/Active_travel_synthesis_final.pdf)  
6. <http://www.cyclingscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Active-Travel-Active-Scotland-full-report.pdf>  
7. [http://www.cyclinguk.org/sites/default/files/file\\_public/climate-change1drvbrf.pdf](http://www.cyclinguk.org/sites/default/files/file_public/climate-change1drvbrf.pdf)  
8. <http://www.nature.com/articles/srep01001>  
9. <http://www.apho.org.uk/resource/item.aspx?RID=91553>  
10. <https://www.nice.org.uk/advice/LGB8/chapter/What-can-local-authorities-achieve-by-encouraging-walking-and-cycling>  
11. <http://transformscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/The-Value-of-Cycle-Tourism-full-report.pdf>

# BETTER FOR EVERYONE

At the moment, investment is heavily skewed towards car travel - but **around one-third of Scottish households don't have access to a car**.<sup>12</sup> Promoting walking and cycling - low-cost accessible forms of travel - helps ensure everyone has equal access to amenities and job opportunities.

**Better infrastructure helps widen access to cycling**, particularly among children, older people, and people with disabilities - all groups with disproportionately low participation in cycling at the moment.<sup>13</sup>

Walking and cycling are already safe, with health benefits outweighing risks by more than 10 to 1 - but there's also good evidence that **the more people walk and cycle, the safer it gets**.<sup>14</sup>

Walking and cycling-friendly streets are perceived as safer and more inviting, and **promote social interaction and community cohesion**, by putting people - rather than cars - at the centre of our neighbourhoods.<sup>5</sup>

## Can we make it happen?

**Half of all journeys in Scotland are less than 2 miles - the perfect distance for walking or cycling.**<sup>6</sup>

At the moment, cycling accounts for less than 2% of journeys in Britain.<sup>6</sup> In other countries with better infrastructure, this is much higher - such as the Netherlands, with a whopping 26%, and Denmark an impressive 19%.

The enthusiasm is there - **surveys show that many people want to walk or cycle more**<sup>5</sup> - but infrastructure is a key barrier. Research in Scotland has found that access to safe cycling routes is one of the most important factors in people's decision as to whether to cycle.<sup>15</sup> A recent poll found that **71% of people support building cycle paths on main roads**.<sup>16</sup>

Case studies across the UK have shown that **relatively large increases in active travel can be achieved in a short space of time**, with the right commitment and funding.<sup>6</sup>

**Local political leadership can make a big difference**, since local authorities in Scotland are responsible for decisions about transport, planning, and the environment.

Increasing active travel has many potential benefits for councils: improvements in air quality, road safety, journey times, social inclusion and community participation, health and wellbeing, and the public realm.<sup>12</sup>

## How can we make it happen?

**We Walk, We Cycle, We Vote** is asking candidates to sign up to three key pledges:

**Investment:** Provide sustained, long term investment in both cycling and walking, reaching 10% of the transport budget.

**Infrastructure:** Build and maintain dedicated cycling infrastructure suitable for people of all ages and abilities.

**Local action:** To solve the main local barriers to active travel, as identified by residents and businesses.

### Consider asking your candidates:

What's your position on increasing the proportion of the transport budget spent on walking & cycling?

Do you see better infrastructure for active travel as a priority in our area?

How would you champion walking and cycling in your role as a councillor, if elected?

What do you think the main barriers to active travel are locally, and how should they be solved?

12. <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/08/3720/7>

13. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01441647.2015.1014451>

14. [http://www.noo.org.uk/slide\\_sets/activity](http://www.noo.org.uk/slide_sets/activity)

15. [http://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/0403/CS5\\_web.pdf](http://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/0403/CS5_web.pdf)

16. <https://www.britishcycling.org.uk/campaigning/article/20160301-campaigning-news-New-poll-reveals-overwhelming-public-support-for-new-cycling-infrastructure-0>