

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.¹

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

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 active¹. New evidence is emerging that this is exactly the group who are most likely to benefit from better infrastructure for walking and cycling.^{4,5}

#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.**⁶

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.⁷

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%.⁸



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.**⁹ 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.¹⁰ In rural areas, cycling and walking can attract significant tourist income.¹¹

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
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
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**.¹² 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.¹³

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**.¹⁴

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.⁵

Can we make it happen?

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

At the moment, cycling accounts for less than 2% of journeys in Britain.⁶ 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**⁵ - 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.¹⁵ A recent poll found that **71% of people support building cycle paths on main roads**.¹⁶

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.⁶

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.¹²

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

15. 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>