



Walking and cycling: an action plan

Walking and cycling are good for our health, good for getting us around, good for our public spaces and good for our society. For all of these reasons we need to persuade more people to choose to walk and cycle more often.

Around 60% of men and 70% of women are currently not physically active enough to benefit their health. Walking and cycling offer the opportunity to build moderate, pleasant exercise into people's routines. This kind of exercise can help us to counteract problems of overweight and obesity as well as coronary heart disease, stroke, diabetes and cancer in addition to improving mental wellbeing. Walking and cycling are also vital means of travel. In themselves, they are viable modes of transport for many of our trips. Nearly a quarter of all our trips are one mile or less - a generally walkable distance. And 42% are within two miles - less than the average length of a cycling trip. But in addition, walking and cycling provide the vital links to our public transport systems and a 'no-emissions' alternative to motor vehicles.

Increasing walking and cycling levels will also improve our public space and the social interactions we have. Both modes allow us to stop and chat or just say 'hello' in a way which it is difficult to do when closeted in the car. As such, they improve our sense of community. They also provide for more pleasant and sustainable public spaces and serve to support local facilities.

Nobody in Government would claim that it will be easy to reverse the long-term decline in walking and cycling. But this action plan sets out the shorter-term, practical steps which Government and its partners will now take with the aim of increasing levels of cycling and walking. The plan is the result of a wide-ranging consultation within Government and with cycling and walking groups.

We will continue to work across Government to see these actions through. But we will also pick up later in the year the challenges posed in the ongoing work on the White Paper on Public Health and the response to the *Choosing Activity?* consultation.

The barriers to walking and cycling have developed over a long period of time and we want to work towards long-term changes to overcome those barriers. For walking and cycling, this action plan marks a beginning, rather than an end.