



Walking and Cycling Plan

2021-2024



Forward

Improving access and uptake of walking and cycling within Blackburn with Darwen is an agenda that cuts across a number of important council priorities. Striving for higher rates of walking and cycling in the borough complements multiple varied ambitions, including priorities around physical activity, improving road safety, becoming carbon neutral by 2030 and sustainably improving connectivity within this growing borough.

Whilst the COVID-19 pandemic has brought significant

challenges, there are opportunities to be capitalised upon. As we move into the recovery phase of the pandemic increasing walking and cycling should be part of building a healthier, happier, more connected and more prosperous borough.

Therefore, the Blackburn with Darwen Walking and Cycling Plan outlines how the council will work with residents and partners to allow our communities to be safe, active and enjoy their local area via walking and cycling.



Councillor Damian Talbot
**Executive Member for Public
Health and Wellbeing**



Councillor Phil Riley
**Executive Member for
Growth and Development**

P. Riley

Executive summary

The Blackburn with Darwen Walking and Cycling Plan envisions a future where walking and cycling are first choice methods for making shorter journeys and enjoying local communities in a safe and healthy way. The plan aims to coordinate efforts by multidisciplinary stakeholders to increase walking and cycling uptake within the borough.

The Plan's aims complement national, regional and local priorities in the realms of health and wellbeing, air quality, climate change, road safety, planning and transport. This plan will contribute to achieving important strategic corporate goals for the council and formulates as a daughter document to the impending Local Transport Plan 4 and vision for the upcoming renewal of The Local Plan. The plan pulls together what work is ongoing in the area of walking and cycling, aims to increase co-ordination between partners and stakeholders, and lays out our future ambitions for active travel.

The principles running through this plan include:

- Taking a life course approach
- Aiming to increase access and reduce inequalities in walking and cycling uptake
- Focusing on joined up and partnership working

The benefits of walking and cycling are wide ranging, highlighted in this plan are:

- Improved health and wellbeing
- Improved air quality
- Reduced carbon emissions
- Reduced congestion
- Local economy benefits
- Improved amenity and quality of place

Taking a whole system approach, the building blocks of this plan to improve walking and cycling are made up of:

- Improved walking and cycling infrastructure
- Community engagement
- Business engagement
- Walking and cycling at the heart of policy
- Monitoring and evaluation



The Walking and Cycling Plan on a Page

Improve walking and cycling infrastructure

- Deliver phase 2 of the emergency active travel fund infrastructure project
- Develop BwD Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) – strategic plans for developing active travel infrastructure in the borough
- Centre walking and cycling in any infrastructure or highways decisions, and continue work to improve safety e.g. road safety infrastructure and speed reduction mechanisms
- Pilot and introduce school streets initiatives

Community engagement in walking and cycling

- Wide reaching community consultation on the contents of this plan, as well as any new walking and cycling infrastructure, school streets initiatives or similar programmes
- Prioritise initiatives that target under-represented and disadvantaged groups in walking and cycling
- Use and development of community assets for walking and cycling such as our green spaces
- Ongoing social media engagement
- New walking and cycling partnership officer roles to ensure programmes are linked and work synergistically

Business engagement in walking and cycling

- Ongoing scheme to encourage hiring of bikes and e-bikes for commuting
- Explore options for the council to encourage and facilitate employees to take up active commuting
- Learn from other areas e.g. Birmingham who have used investment in cycling to stimulate jobs in the area e.g. bike mechanics and cycle instructors

Embed walking and cycling at the heart of policy

- This Plan to act as a daughter document to the impending Local Transport Plan 4, with sustainable travel set out as a key priority, and contribute to the vision for the new Local Plan
- Priorities and direction set out in this Plan to contribute to the council's strategic corporate goals within health, place and growth
- Ongoing engagement with elected members from across the council around what can be done to encourage more walking and cycling

Monitoring and evaluating progress

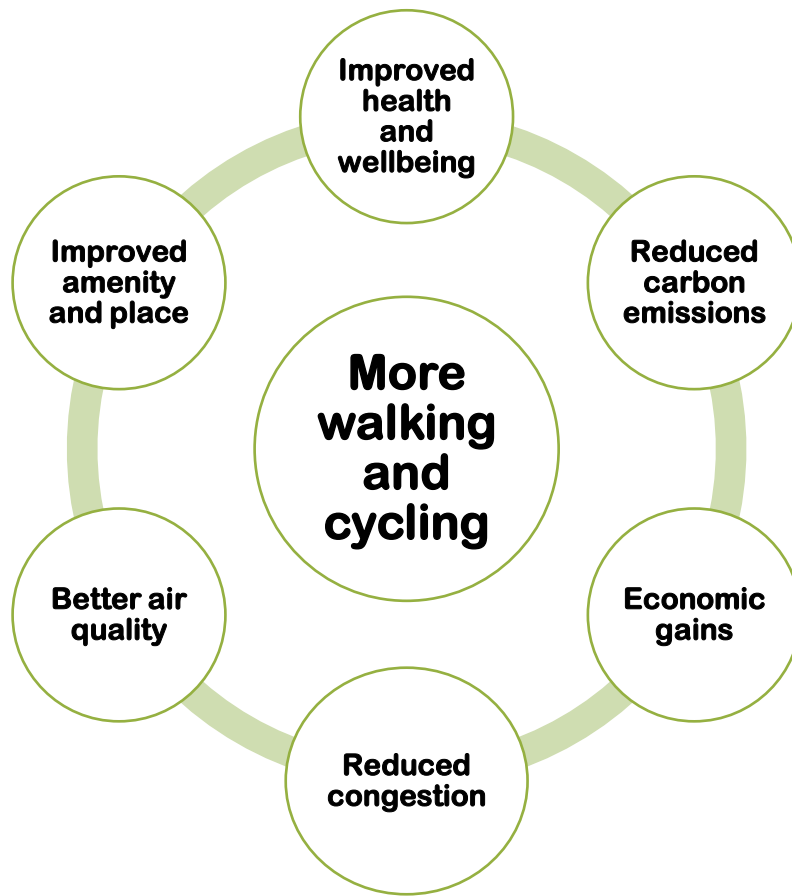
- Monitor the numbers of people walking and cycling, modes of transport used for journeys and types of people walking and cycling. Long term goals to coincide with the Lancashire 10 year walking and cycling strategy 2018-2028.
- Ongoing community feedback and engagement
- Ongoing investigation into more ways in which walking and cycling can be monitored e.g. with use of data from apps such as Strava, more cycle counters etc.

The long term vision of the plan is a future in Blackburn with Darwen where walking and cycling are first choice methods of making shorter journeys and enjoying local communities in a safe and healthy way.

This plan aims to pull together and coordinate efforts by multidisciplinary stakeholders to increase walking and cycling uptake in the borough. With a specific emphasis on a life course approach and reducing inequalities in walking and cycling uptake.



Benefits of walking and cycling



Building blocks for more walking and cycling



The national, regional and policy context

Increasing uptake of cycling and walking is a national priority. Making cycling and walking the “natural choice” for individuals taking shorter journeys or making multi-modal journeys was the aim laid out by the Department for Transport’s cycling and walking investment strategy in 2017 and is a key focus of the Transport Decarbonisation Plan recently published.

The Access Fund as part of the 2017 strategy has funded the Connecting East Lancashire initiative, which aims to increase connectivity and job opportunities in the region via active travel.

With the COVID-19 pandemic there has been a renewed focus on the benefits of increased walking and cycling for society. The central government’s release of emergency funding for active travel infrastructure, the Capability Fund and Gear Change document has emphasised the importance of taking advantage of this unique period in history.

Blackburn with Darwen is a growing borough and has an established growth strategy, with a focus on improvements to housing, employment and town centres. In order to maintain continued growth, a new Local Plan is emerging which anticipates a further 7,000 homes and 5,000 jobs over the next 15 years. One of the Core Policies of the emerging Local Plan highlights accessibility as a key strategic objective for Blackburn with Darwen, requiring developments to be accessible by a choice of active travel modes, therefore encouraging a modal shift and reducing the need for people to travel by car. A suite of connectivity studies have been prepared to appraise the potential impact of development on local walking and cycling networks and provide recommendations as to potential improvements

“Like lots of mums, I have a busy work-family life balance to maintain, so trying cycling wasn’t something I expected to have time for. I’m so glad I got into it during lockdown – staying active while we had to stay at home more often, and now I encourage my friends and family to try it too.”

Resident Sam Riddehough

which could be provided by or funded via the developments. In addition, a Borough-wide Transport Study is underway, evaluating the network and suggesting improvement schemes for both the highway and sustainable transport network.

Therefore, the BwD Walking and Cycling Plan will act as a daughter document to the impending Local Transport Plan 4, which is set to have a specific focus on sustainable travel. In addition, Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) are a vitally important component of strategically developing infrastructure which facilitates active travel. This plan therefore commits to their development within the objective of ‘improved walking and cycling infrastructure’.

The council has declared a climate emergency, and the direction laid out in this plan contributes to the BwD Climate Emergency Action Plan published in 2020, with encouraging active travel a key component.

Furthermore, the council is committed to working towards improving the health of residents as laid out in the BwD Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the BwD Eat Well, Move More, Shape up Strategy, and the BwD Corporate Plan. Increasing rates of walking and cycling has the potential to improve health via increased physical activity, improved mental wellbeing, better air quality and improved road safety.

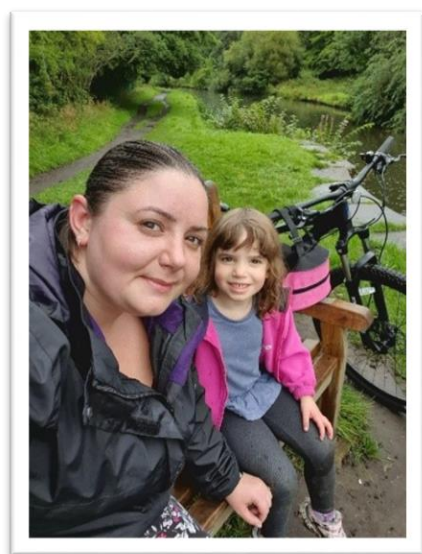


Photo courtesy of resident Sam Riddehough

As the below diagrammatic representation demonstrates, prioritising walking and cycling coincides with a number of policy areas locally, regionally and nationally. Increased walking and cycling can deliver *health and wealth* complementing priorities within *health promotion, air pollution, climate change and economic prosperity for the area*.



Benefits of more walking and cycling

Improved Health and Wellbeing

Blackburn with Darwen has low levels of physical activity compared to regional and national averages, with a quarter of adults in BwD physically inactive and only one third of children in BwD active. Prioritising cycling and walking is key to combatting the risks of physical inactivity including heart disease, diabetes and mental health problems. This plan will support efforts to implement World Health Organisation recommendations and NICE Guidelines for physical activity to combat the rise of non-communicable disease. In addition, Blackburn with Darwen has high levels of deprivation which are key drivers for major health inequalities. There is evidence that policies that promote active travel can benefit the most disadvantaged provided they are designed and delivered in a way that acknowledges and aims to reduce inequalities.

Sadly, BwD has the highest rate in the North West of children killed or seriously injured on the road. By encouraging less cars on the road, initiatives like school streets, and safe walking and cycle infrastructure which prioritises those not in cars can contribute to the aim of improving this statistic. This coincides with the borough's strategy to reduce and prevent such accidents and injuries.



“I love nothing better than putting my boots on and escaping for an hour or so on my own. The benefits to mood and mental health are amazing.”

- Resident Sharon Connolly

Reduced Carbon Emissions

There is no denying that global warming and reducing carbon emissions is the challenge of our time, and a priority for the British government and the local authority. Evidence shows that walking and cycling can reduce short car trips by 41% given the right infrastructure and priority setting. This could save an additional 5% of CO2 emissions from cars, an important contribution considering transport is the only industry in which emissions continue to rise. Although emissions from BwD have been trending downward, total and per capita CO2 emissions from the borough rose in 2019 compared to 2018. Therefore, now is the time to for concerted action to reduce transport emissions.



Photo courtesy of Councillor Jackie Floyd

"My e-bike is terrific! As a Councillor I'm busy most weekdays visiting communities in my ward. I live at the top of a very big hill which can look daunting on two wheels but the electric bike powers through. I make sure I wear comfortable clothes and shoes, and off I go! In September I gave up my car and for weeks I rode my bike rain or shine, occasionally sharing my husband's car. It's been relatively easy." Councillor Jackie Floyd

Boost economy and trade, improved amenity and place

Transport for London have collated the evidence for the economic benefits of walking and cycling. The evidence shows that increased walking and cycling can increase traffic to local business, as when individuals are not in their car they are more likely to stop and purchase from local shops. Improvements to street infrastructure and appearances will also attract walkers and cyclists to the area. Walking and cycling are also accessible means of transport for employees and people seeking work, and encouraging interest in cycling can open up employment prospects in this lucrative and growing industry. The benefits of a more active population will additionally lead to fewer days away from work, as well as the huge economic savings that can be made from a healthier population.

"Blackburn with Darwen is very fortunate to have some great parks with walks, trails and is also surrounded by moorland. The views are fantastic." Resident Tracy Robinson



Photo courtesy of resident Tracy Robinson

Reduced congestion

Congestion in the UK cost the average driver £1, 317 in 2018 and UK economy an estimated £8 billion. This is due to a combination of reduced productivity, movement of goods and increased fuel costs. Less cars on the roads for short journeys such as the school run will reduce congestion in the local area. Congestion is a particular problem around school drop-off and pick-up times in BwD, encouraging more families to choose to walk and cycle will improve the environment and safety around our schools.

“If there are too many cars it’s bad for the local environment, and walking to school and back is good for your health”

Resident Sharik (year 7)

Better air quality

Evidence continues to accumulate detailing the effects of air pollution on our health. It can affect individuals throughout the life course, including increased risk of pregnancy loss, asthma, heart disease, diabetes and dementia. In a landmark ruling, air pollution was noted as a cause of death for a child with asthma, highlighting the very real dangers for individuals exposed. BwD currently has 4 air quality management areas in Intack, Bastwell, Blackamoor and Four Lane Ends. These areas failed to meet the national targets for nitrogen dioxide levels, largely due to vehicle exhaust emissions. Therefore, encouraging more walking and cycling over short car journeys has the potential improve these figures. Air pollution is most likely to affect the most disadvantaged in society, and with a statutory duty to ensure air quality is safe, the local authority needs to prioritise active travel as a method of reducing damaging air particulates.



Residents Sharik (Year 7), Ayza (Year 6) and Haris (EYFS) walk to school together as a family.

Progress and plans for the future

Improve walking and cycling infrastructure

The Local Authority has been successful in securing money from the emergency active travel fund (309k in capital and 60k in revenue) to make improvements to cycling and walking infrastructure. Branded as Blackburn Stride and Ride (BSR), phase 1 of this scheme provides a permanent safe walking / cycling route from Witton Park where we already have a fantastic Cycle Centre facility, to Blackburn town centre with improved infrastructure, encouraging and promoting safer walking and cycling for the last 2 miles of the daily commute for students and workers. Building on the existing National Cycle Route 6 (NCR6) the whole route is supported with new signage and segregated cycle lanes. This corridor encompasses 3 schools and Blackburn College, providing great opportunities to encourage safer walking and cycling, reduce traffic and increase road safety.



The second phase of the allocation will aim to complement the works already completed, and is under consultation. Both schemes are strategically located to better develop active travel access to employment, housing and education.

Additionally, innovative ways to encourage walking, particularly to school, and engage schools and communities are underway, with a novel crossing already installed on Bolton road, Darwen. The UV light technology used to highlight pedestrians is a new way to improve road safety and encourage people to travel actively. The colourful design is bright and attractive, particularly for children.

Actions for future infrastructure improvements:

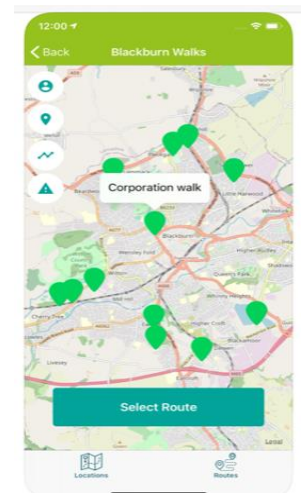
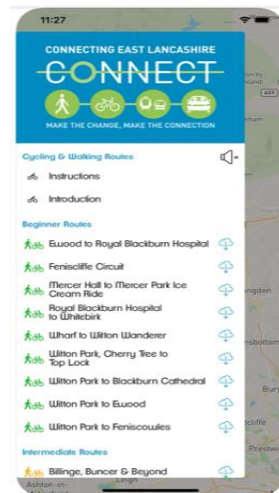
- Deliver phase 2 of the emergency active travel fund
- Develop Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans
- Centre walking and cycling in any infrastructure or highways decisions, and continue to work to improve road safety
- Pilot and introduce school streets initiatives

Community Engagement

With a commitment to community involvement the [Walking and Cycling Consultation Plan](#) sets out how all stakeholders will be involved in the development of new walking and cycling infrastructure funding by the Emergency Active Travel Fund.

The update to the Connecting East Lancashire website includes a hub for surveys and community engagement to compliment communication through social media channels and to council staff, with includes a Blackburn with Darwen facebook group set up to share walking and cycling stories and viewpoints and engage with residents.

Surveys have already been completed by parents in schools about their travel habits and wants, and there are plans to introduce BwD's first [School Streets](#) initiative, in order to reduce congestion around schools, increase safety and encourage active travel as a part of traveling to school. Additionally the [Connect East Lancashire cycling app](#) details routes from beginner to advanced, and helps riders plan their days out, encouraging an enjoyment of the local area via bike. The [ExploreBwD](#) app encourages exploration of the local area on foot.



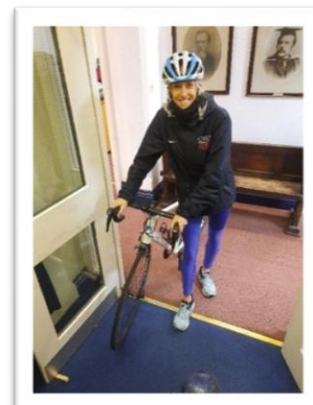
Actions for future community engagement:

- Community consultation on the contents of this plan, as well as any new walking and cycling infrastructure, schools streets initiatives or similar programmes
- Prioritise initiatives that target under-represented and disadvantaged groups in walking and cycling e.g. engaging with Age UK, foster families and care leavers, running cycle sessions for women from minoritised ethnicities, supporting walking groups
- Use and development of community assets for walking and cycling such as our green and blue spaces
- Ongoing social media engagement
- New walking and cycling partnership officer roles to ensure programmes are linked and work well synergistically

Business Engagement

With the Connecting East Lancashire programme there was recognition that connectivity within the region was vitally important for economic growth and allowing individuals to access employment opportunities. This programme aims to facilitate ways individuals can make these journeys in a sustainable way. The programme includes working with businesses to develop sustainable travel plans, bike hire to employees, bike maintenance training and facilitating workplace walks. With the hugely valuable asset that is the Witton Park cycling centre, this is a hub where individuals and business can hire bikes of all kinds including e-bikes.

The first tranche of the Department for Transport's Emergency Active Travel Fund allowed for a safe walking and cycling route from Witton park to the centre of Blackburn – completed in Summer 2020. This will allow people to feel safe when commuting into the centre of Blackburn for work or study, and ability to park and ride or stride from Witton park. Coupled with the cycling centre this provides the perfect opportunity for bike hire for commuting. The cycle path also provides the perfect step up for beginner cyclists who have become confident within the park.



Local commuter Samantha

Actions for future business engagement:

- Ongoing scheme to encourage hiring of bikes and e-bikes for commuting
- Explore options for the council to encourage and facilitate an active commute
- Learn from other areas like Birmingham who have used investment in cycling to simulate jobs in the area e.g. bike mechanics and cycle instructors

Walking and cycling at the heart of policy

With the release of the emergency active travel fund the formation of the “Stride and Ride Group” was the first time that departments throughout the council working on improving walking and cycling for the population were brought together. This has allowed individuals representing highways, leisure, public health, transport, road safety and planning and communications, and a vital step in ensuring walking and cycling priorities are embedded throughout the council.

Actions to keep walking and cycling at the heart of policy:

- This Plan to act as a daughter document to the impending Local Transport Plan 4, with sustainable travel set out as a key priority, and contribute to the vision for the new Local Plan
- Priorities and direction set out in this Plan to contribute to the council’s strategic corporate goals within health, place and growth
- Ongoing engagement with elected members from across the council around what can be done to encourage more walking and cycling

Monitoring and evaluation

The wide ranging nature of the initiatives involved in promoting walking and cycling will require bespoke and tailored metrics and information gathering to assess performance and effectiveness of individual projects. Higher level indicators can then also be measured. They will tie in with the local travel plan objectives and outcomes, and will need to detail ambitious but achievable goals. Information about walking and cycling in the borough is already being assessed, this includes data from national and local surveys and apps such as Strava.

Actions for monitoring and evaluation

- Monitor the numbers of people walking and cycling, modes of transport used for journeys and types of people walking and cycling. Long term goals will coincide with the Lancashire 10 year walking and cycling strategy 2018-2028
 - Goal to double cycling rates from 2018-2028
 - 2018: 5.4% of people cycled once per week in BwD
 - *Target:* 8.1% by 2024 and 10.8% by 2028
 - Goal to see a 10% increase in walking rates from 2018-2028
 - 2018: 61.8% of people walked once per week in BwD
 - *Target:* 64.9% by 2024 and 68.0% by 2028
 - Data from DfT National Travel Survey and Sport England's Active Travel Survey
- Ongoing community feedback and engagement
- Ongoing investigation into more ways in which walking and cycling can be monitored e.g. from data such as Strava, more cycle counters, school travel surveys
- Ongoing monitoring of metrics including physical activity levels, air pollution levels and carbon emissions in line with corresponding strategies

