

WALKING WHEELING AND CYCLING FOR RESILIENCE: THE ROLE OF ACTIVE TRAVEL INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE TRANSPORT NETWORK

ABSTRACT Across the UK, the role of active travel (walking, wheeling and cycling) is increasingly recognised as a key piece of the transport jigsaw. Active travel provides social, economic and environmental benefits by connecting neighbourhoods and improving the health and wellbeing of communities. Offering people a choice reduces our reliance on traditional transport infrastructure, decreasing road and rail congestion, and reducing air pollution. Consequently, provision of high-quality walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure increases the resilience of the transport network as a whole.

Walk Wheel Cycle Trust's long-running Walking and Cycling Index provides critical data on the value of active travel infrastructure investment. Within the Index cities, 56% of residents supported "shifting investment from road building schemes to fund walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport" (Sustrans, 2024, p.5). It is clear that there is potential for active travel infrastructure to form an integral element of the transport network. The proposed Integrated National Transport Strategy¹ demonstrates such an ambition at a national level.

This paper presents case-studies of proposed and constructed schemes from across the Walk Wheel Cycle Trust. Situated in urban, sub-urban, and rural locations, we demonstrate how these schemes encourage use through removing physical and perceived barriers while responding to a changing climate. We reflect on the challenges and opportunities faced in delivery and present a case for meaningful inclusion of active travel infrastructure in a resilient transport network. We frame the challenges in the context of the Walking and Cycling Index and the Integrated National Transport Strategy, and suggest how future delivery might be improved.

¹proposed release late 2025

Sustrans (2024), Walking and Cycling Index 2023: UK Report [Online]. Available at <https://www.walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk/media/13416/sustrans-2023-walking-and-cycling-index-uk-aggregated-report.pdf>