



Gear change: One year review



Last year, the Department for Transport's 'Gear Change' vision set a compelling answer to the main barriers to walking and cycling through a series of policy, funding and enforcement organisation solutions. The announcement of an unprecedented £2bn funding for Active Travel over the course of five years was welcome, alongside the proposed changes to the Highway Code and the new LTN 1/20 which aligned cycling design standards with international best practice. Our analysis of the original document can be [found here](#).

Earlier this summer, the DfT released a one-year review of the implementation of [Gear Change](#) for cycling and walking. The report's positive and pro-active tone of voice is striking. It serves to remind readers that the debate on road space re-allocation is 'sometimes conducted on the assumption that everyone drives'. Reference is made within the report to car ownership statistics within cities such as Newcastle, Nottingham, Hull, Manchester and Liverpool - where close to half of households do not own a car.

In this briefing note, we summarise the main points of the review, provide some commentary on what has been achieved to-date, and give our views on what to expect for the year to come and beyond.



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What has been achieved...

Of the new fund,

£377million

has been allocated in England this year on the following projects:



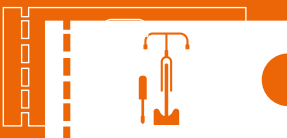
100s of
'School streets'
closed to motor
traffic at peak times
implemented



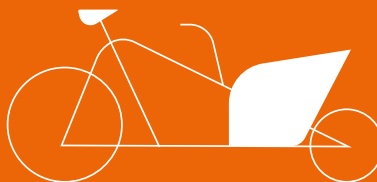
150
Low Traffic
Neighbourhoods
added to the hundreds
already in place



100 miles
of new cycle lanes
have been created



400,000
'Fix Your Bike'
vouchers were
distributed



600
cargo bikes
were rolled out
across England

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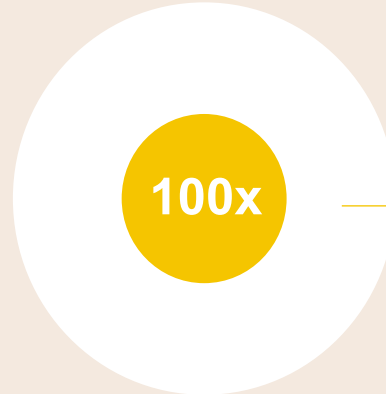
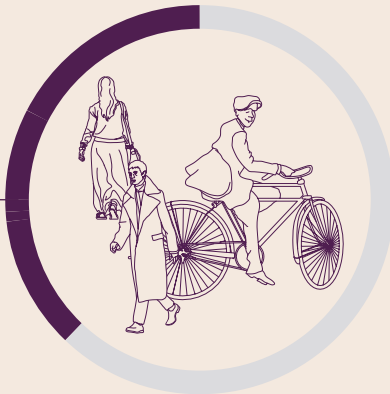




The results speak for themselves:



37% of UK adults wanting to buy a bike within the next six months...



Cycling levels are up by 100 x previous levels and in places by as much as 200 times greater than before.



The UK cycling market is booming with a 45% increase in the average number of cyclists since 2019.



On Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, the report also highlights the fact that the majority of people do support changes and that there is a growing body of strong evidence to support this, regardless of the sometimes more vocal opposition which tends to be overestimated.

Further, support for these schemes tends to grow the longer schemes are implemented for - over time the health, safety, social and economic benefits are realised as adjustments in travel patterns are made (often leading to reductions in traffic both within and outside these areas). The report also points to evidence that these measures do not increase emergency response times, as is often claimed by opponents to LTN schemes. Conversely, benefits to public safety have often been observed following the implementation of these schemes.

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What is yet to come:

In light of these encouraging results, the Government has made an increased pledge of up to £438m of funding for the year to come (also including £100m as part of the latest Transport for London settlement deal to December 2021).

This funding will go towards building on the various schemes listed above, but will also include:



Roll out of Active Travel England to monitor and enforce the cycling and walking budget



A new version of the Highway Code to ensure road users that do the greatest harm have the greatest responsibility



Pilots of waste collection schemes to avoid duplicating waste lorry trips in urban settings



A response to the consultation on pavement parking, including solutions to remove obstructions to pedestrians



The creation of 12 mini-holland projects outside London

Beyond the creation of these schemes, the main commitment, in our view, is the strength of messaging discouraging local authorities to remove schemes that have not been implemented for at least 12 months; this time is seen as critical in order to allow sufficient time to gather sound evidence. The government is also prepared to reduce funding to those councils who do not provide sound evidence of how their proposals benefit Active Travel (or cannot, as a result of premature removal).

Equally, local authorities will be given new powers related to moving traffic offences such as disregarding one-way systems or entering mandatory cycle lanes so as to reduce police workload and allow officers to improve the enforcement of more important contraventions.

Conclusions

The report celebrates the achievements from the past 12 months and sets a clear direction to maintain the pace for walking and cycling improvements across the country. It provides an encouraging set of metrics and evidence for professionals of the built environment and decision makers looking to improve streets and neighbourhoods. It also provides a clear warning to those who don't take Active Travel seriously. We look forward to the monitoring of these metrics year on year as the effects on travel evolve following the pandemic and the subsequent lifting of travel restrictions.