

Annexe 2 – Benefits of Active Travel

Kent County Council - Draft Active Travel Strategy

May 2016

Physical Activity

Evidence for the beneficial effect of increasing levels of physical activity in all parts of the population is robust and well documented¹². Low levels of physical activity are responsible for 17% of all premature deaths in the UK population, causing diabetes, heart disease and other preventable conditions³.

Initiatives to improve levels of physical activity in Kent are needed. 44%⁴ of the Kent adult population do not currently meet recommended weekly levels of physical activity⁵. 28%⁶ of these people are 'physically inactive', meaning they do little or no physical activity of any kind. The Kent population falls below the UK average for levels of physical activity⁷. 65% of adults in Kent are above a healthy weight, and 33% of children are above a healthy weight by the time they leave primary school⁸.

Active travel gives people an opportunity to be physically active as part of their daily routine, which can contribute to improved health and help to prevent or manage a range of chronic diseases^{9,10,11}. The contribution that active travel can make to physical activity and health has also been recognised by Government^{12,13}. Using active travel also incorporates physical activity into everyday tasks, which can reduce the need to find extra time or money to exercise specifically for the health benefits.

It is also recognised that recreational routes can assist with modal shift towards active travel for functional journeys. Active travel, in particular walking, has few barriers to participation.

¹ World Health Organisation (2010). Global Recommendations on Physical Activity for Health. http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/factsheet_recommendations/en/

² Department of Health (2011). Start Active, Stay Active: a report on physical activity from the four home countries' Chief Medical Officers. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/start-active-stay-active-a-report-on-physical-activity-from-the-four-home-countries-chief-medical-officers>

³ Lee, I, et al. (2012). Effect of physical inactivity on major non-communicable diseases worldwide: an analysis of burden of disease and life expectancy. *The Lancet*. 380 (9838), 219-229. [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(12\)61031-9/abstract](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(12)61031-9/abstract)

⁴ Public Health England (2016). Public Health Outcomes Framework. <http://www.phoutcomes.info/public-health-outcomes-framework#gid/1000042/pat/6/ati/102/page/0/par/E12000008/are/E10000016>

⁵ Department of Health (2011). Start Active, Stay Active: a report on physical activity from the four home countries' Chief Medical Officers. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/start-active-stay-active-a-report-on-physical-activity-from-the-four-home-countries-chief-medical-officers>

⁶ Public Health England (2016). Public Health Outcomes Framework. <http://www.phoutcomes.info/public-health-outcomes-framework#gid/1000042/pat/6/ati/102/page/0/par/E12000008/are/E10000016>

⁷ IBID

⁸ IBID

⁹ Public Health England (2014). Everybody Active Every Day. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/everybody-active-every-day-a-framework-to-embed-physical-activity-into-daily-life>

¹⁰ Department of Health (2011). Start Active, Stay Active: a report on physical activity from the four home countries' Chief Medical Officers. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/start-active-stay-active-a-report-on-physical-activity-from-the-four-home-countries-chief-medical-officers>

¹¹ UK Active (2014). Steps to Solving Inactivity http://www.ukactive.com/downloads/managed/Steps_to_Solving_Inactivity_-_Up_to_date.pdf

¹² Department for Transport (2009) The Physical Fitness Sub-objective, TAG Unit 3.3.12, Transport Appraisal Guidance <http://www.dft.gov.uk/webtag/documents/expert/unit3.3.12.php>

¹³ Department for Transport (2011) Creating Growth, Cutting Carbon: Making Sustainable Local Transport Happen <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/regional/sustainabletransport/>

Encouragement of walking has been found to be one of the most effective methods for the promotion of physical activity in a sedentary population¹⁴.

Congestion & Air Quality

Making shorter journeys using active means of travel can contribute to reducing congestion by reducing the number of cars on the road¹⁵. In urban areas, journey times are often shorter when walking or cycling as users are able to take advantage of paths not accessible to motor vehicles.

5.3% of early deaths in the UK can be attributed to long-term exposure to small particles polluting the air¹⁶, making air pollution the greatest environmental risk linked to deaths every year.

Reducing the number of cars on the road can also contribute to improved air quality and reduced carbon emissions¹⁷. In 2012, 21% of UK domestic greenhouse gas emissions were from transport¹⁸. Road transport is the largest contributor to total transport greenhouse gas emissions, comprising 68% of the total amount produced, including 40% from cars and taxis¹⁹. Making more journeys using active travel, including part-journeys that use public transport, can make a significant contribution to reducing the levels of emissions from private motor vehicles.

The number of cars on the road has increased year-on-year since 1950²⁰, and this trend is projected to continue. Making more journeys using active travel will become of greater importance and convenience in the future.

The number of people walking and cycling has declined in the last 20 years. Fewer than 1 in 10 people walk to work in the South East, with an average journey time of 14 minutes. At average walking speeds, this would mean covering distances of half a mile to one mile. 3 out of every 100 people cycle to work in the South East despite 45% of people over the age of 5 years old owning a bike. Men are more than twice as likely to cycle to work as women, and the average length of journeys by cycle has increased since 1996²¹.

Walking is significantly more popular than cycling as a transport option. 22% of all journeys in the UK in 2013 were made by walking; just 2% were made by cycling. Walking to school or college is currently the main reason people walk for transport; 22% of journeys made by walking were for the school run whilst just 8% were for commuting to work or business trips²².

Barriers to Active Travel

Whilst walking and cycling offer increased health through physical activity, they also present risks through, for example, atmospheric pollution, road crashes and social inequality.

¹⁴ Hillsdon, M. (1996) A systematic review of physical activity promotion strategies, British Journal of Sports Medicine, volume 30, number 2, pp. 84-89.

¹⁵ NICE (2012) Walking and cycling: local measures to promote walking and cycling as forms of travel or recreation. PH41. <http://guidance.nice.org.uk/PH41>

¹⁶ Public Health England (2016). Public Health Outcomes Framework. <http://www.phoutcomes.info/public-health-outcomes-framework#gid/1000042/pat/6/ati/102/page/0/par/E12000008/are/E10000016>

¹⁷ NICE (2012) Walking and cycling: local measures to promote walking and cycling as forms of travel or recreation. PH41. <http://guidance.nice.org.uk/PH41>

¹⁸ Department for Transport (2014) Road Transport Statistics 2014 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/transport-statistics-great-britain-2014>

¹⁹ IBID

²⁰ IBID

²¹ Department for Transport (2014) Road Transport Statistics 2014 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/transport-statistics-great-britain-2014>

²² Department for Transport (2014) Road Transport Statistics 2014 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/transport-statistics-great-britain-2014>

A series of workshops to engage stakeholder organisations in Kent showed that common reasons for not making short journeys using active travel include:

- a lack of joined-up routes that allow people to make functional journeys through active travel;
- a lack of knowledge of opportunities for active travel, including knowing where cycle lanes and paths are;
- car parking, street furniture and building in cycle lanes or pedestrian routes;
- issues with safety and perceptions of safety on roads, particularly for vulnerable user groups;
- the relative greater comfort of using a car.

Other issues cited as common barriers to active travel include a lack of motivation in individuals and populations, a lack of time due to modern lifestyles, necessity for families to make multi-drop journeys, disability or injury, carrying heavy loads or transporting young children and pets, poor weather especially in winter, and the social trend that with increasing affluence people are able to buy mobility and convenience²³.

Another key issue is safety. Pedestrians and cyclists suffer the second and third highest casualty rates of all transport types, with 29 and 27 fatalities respectively per billion kilometres travelled²⁴. The perceived safety of cars is supported by evidence, with only two fatalities for the same distance travelled. Perceptions of safety for pedestrians and cyclists go beyond road traffic accidents and include travelling alone along unlit or poorly-lit alleyways and through areas with high rates of crime, particularly for vulnerable groups including children or lone females.

Active Travel in Kent

The following statistics have been identified for Kent:

- 10.1% of Kent workers walk to work, this is higher than the national and regional figure of 9.8%²⁵
- Only 1.1% of people in Kent cycle to work in comparison to 1.9% in England²⁶.
- In Kent, 14.5% of people in Kent say they cycle more than once per month, which is slightly below the national average²⁷
- Pedal cycle KSI casualties have increased in Kent in 2014 to 126% above the 2004-2008 average and collisions involving pedal cycles are now 51% above the 2004 to 2008 baseline²⁸.

The Department for Transport carry out annual count surveys across the county²⁹, the below figure illustrates trends in cycling and all traffic since 2000 to 2014. Traffic figures at regional and national level are robust and are reported as National Statistics. However, this is not the case for road traffic at a local level. These figures are taken from counters on strategic routes across the county and may not reflect the true numbers of cyclists on the roads.

²³ Mackett, R & Brown, B (2011) Transport, Physical Activity and Health: Present knowledge and the way ahead <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/pdf/transportactivityhealth.pdf>

²⁴ Department for Transport (2014) Road Transport Statistics 2014 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/transport-statistics-great-britain-2014>

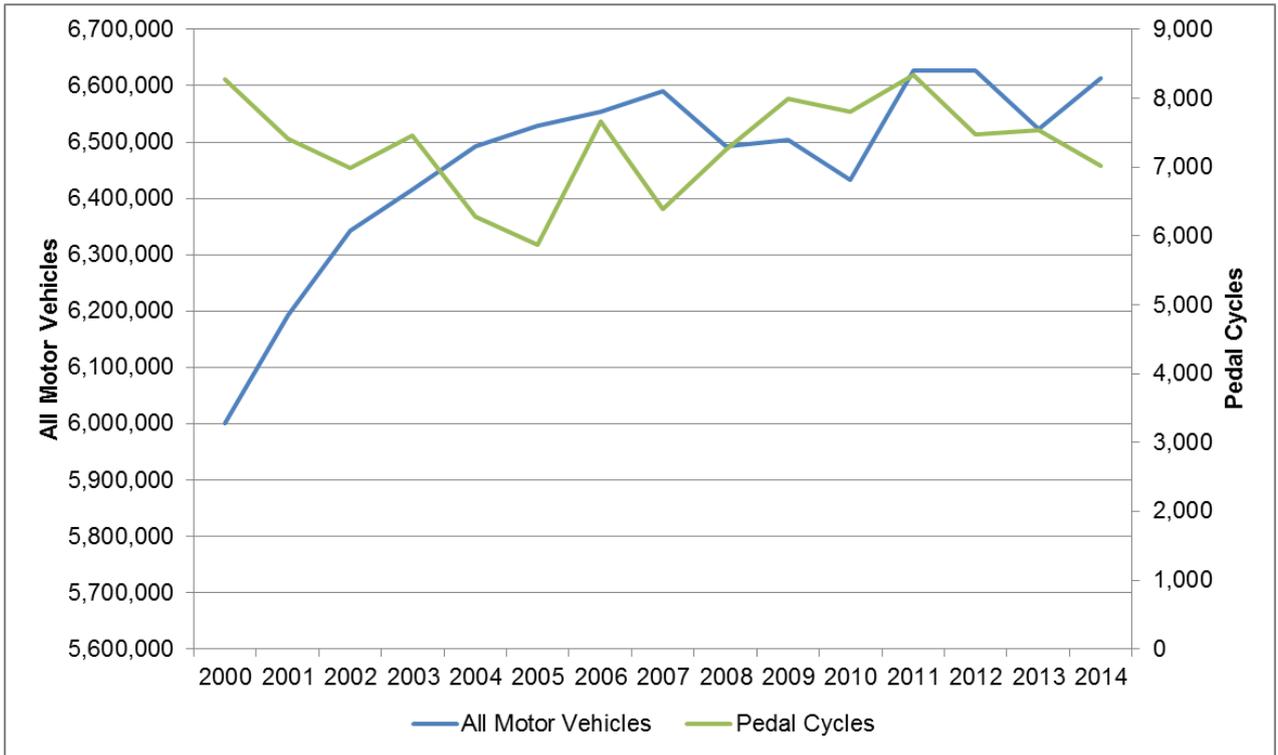
²⁵ shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/facts-and-figures/Population-and-Census/2011%20Census/2011-method-of-travel-to-work.pdf

²⁶ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160105160709/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcm%3A77-353510>

²⁷ Department for Transport (2014) Road Transport Statistics 2014 www.gov.uk/government/statistics/transport-statistics-great-britain-2014

²⁸ Kent County Council 2015

²⁹ www.dft.gov.uk/traffic-counts/area.php?region=South+East&la=Kent



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