

Come to life

Strategy refresh 2023



Sustrans: helping communities come to life

We work for and with communities, helping them come to life by walking, wheeling and cycling to create healthier places and happier lives for everyone.

Across the UK we involve communities in shaping our towns and cities. Together we campaign for and create spaces where everyone can move around safely and give people the tools and confidence to get out of their cars.

We inspire people to change the way we all travel every day, forging closer connections with our neighbours and reducing traffic to create a better environment and more sustainable society for everyone.



The challenges we're facing



In today's complex and uncertain world, the need to achieve Net Zero is widely recognised. The role of transport, as well as its impact on people and places is pivotal.

Transport produced 27% of the UK's total emissions in 2019. Of this, the majority (91%) came from road transport vehicles. This needs to be addressed – urgently.

Sustrans is here to help people walk, wheel and cycle more – and feel better connected and healthier from doing so. We're passionate about making it easier to leave the car at home by creating safe routes that link up with public transport and active travel alternatives.

It's vital to us that we work to create a fairer society by making affordable active travel options accessible to everyone. We know that by doing this, we can improve health and wellbeing, increase social connection and improve the environment.



27% of total emissions in 2019 was produced by transport



91% of these came from road transport vehicles

We're determined to be 'for everyone', recognising that in order to achieve this, we must address inequity by focusing our work where it can benefit the people most in need and have the greatest positive impact.

Our mission

“We make it easier for everyone to walk and cycle.”



Our vision

“A society where the way we travel creates healthier places and happier lives for everyone.”



The changes we want to see:

- Radically reduced traffic speed and volume.
- Creation of sociable spaces where people can easily interact.
- Better connection of people to green and public space.
- Transport and planning policy that puts people first.
- Heritage of the places we work in to be valued and enhanced.
- Cities and towns that are inclusive and safe for all.



Putting the environment front and centre

Making it easy to leave the car at home delivers a better environment for everybody.

How we choose (or are forced) to travel, and our car-dependency in particular, is ruining our environment and contributing towards climate change. This is disproportionately affecting people from marginalised groups and those living in areas with high deprivation, particularly in inner cities.

Air pollution is the biggest environmental threat to health in the UK. What's more, communities already at risk of poorer health are being further disadvantaged by higher exposure to polluted air. Living near busy or dangerous roads can also prevent people from accessing green and public space.

Because of these challenges we will continue to focus on these strategic priorities:

Paths for everyone – growing a UK network of traffic-free paths for everyone connecting cities, towns and countryside, loved by the communities they serve.

Liveable cities and towns for everyone – places that connect us to each other and what we need, where everyone can thrive without having to use a car.

Paths for everyone



We lead change in behaviour: getting people out of their cars and walking, wheeling or cycling for everyday journeys such as to and from school, work and the shops. To achieve this, we prioritise work that makes short everyday journeys easier.

Sustrans is the custodian of the National Cycle Network – the UK-wide network of over 10,000 miles of signed paths and routes for walking, wheeling, cycling and exploring outdoors. This provides a vital backbone to the country, connecting communities to each other and helping neighbourhoods come to life.

We work to ensure the Network is accessible to everyone and easy to reach from towns and cities, so it continues to be a treasured national asset that is loved locally. We promote the use of the Network where it provides a convenient alternative to the car for everyday urban journeys.

In more rural areas, our work highlights the benefits of the Network for getting out and about, and not just for long-distance walking

or cycling as a leisure activity. The Network is a safe place where people can build their confidence for walking, wheeling or cycling, leading to replacing some of their everyday car journeys with active travel alternatives.



We're helping communities come to life by...

Upgrading paths in rural areas to connect people, including those with mobility issues, to each other and to vital services like shops, schools and health centres.



Liveable cities and towns for everyone



For Sustrans, a liveable city or town has social connection at its heart, and clean air and green space for all to live and play in.

In a liveable city or town, it's easy for everyone to move around safely and healthily, whether by walking, cycling or wheeling. The places we live, work and enjoy ourselves are planned around people, not cars. And traffic is reduced, resulting in flourishing communities and thriving businesses.

To create more liveable cities and towns, we'll work with areas looking to make positive changes to help them plan and build in active travel options for their communities. We will work to shape policy, provide expertise on planning and building active travel infrastructure, and deliver programmes which shift people away from car use and help communities come to life.

A liveable town or city:

- Has social connection at its heart.
- Has clean air and green space for all to live and play in.
- Has most of what you need just a short walk away.
- Has roots and celebrates its unique character.
- Is easy for everyone to move around in safely and healthily.



By listening, influencing and finding solutions, we connect people and places, create liveable neighbourhoods and enable happier, healthier daily journeys.

Places designed around cars instead of people are causing a decline in wellbeing. People are less likely to be active in car-dominated environments, and there is the invisible threat of poor air quality.

The places and spaces around us affect how likely we are to walk, wheel or cycle – and how connected our neighbourhoods feel. What's more, the quality of our local area and our community, and how we feel about it, can have a significant impact on well-being.

People who live in areas of higher deprivation are likely to experience fewer positive benefits from their neighbourhoods. They're also more likely to suffer the consequences of poor infrastructure, bad housing, air pollution and lack of green space. Many struggle to make the journeys they need due to poor access to transport, marginalising those without access to a car. The UK is currently facing the largest cost of living crisis for many years, which will only exacerbate this issue.

Together with our partners, volunteers and supporters we are working to make it easier and more attractive to get out of our cars and travel actively.

Transforming where we live through how we travel



We're helping communities come to life by...

Helping schools across the country plan and set up School Streets programmes, restricting traffic at key times to cut pollution and make the journey to school safer for children.



Sustrans is at the heart of the community



We start by listening to the needs and wants of people, particularly the most marginalised.

We're talking to local communities all over the UK, finding out what matters to the people who live there.

Research shows that those living in urban areas of deprivation are often disproportionately affected by the noise and air pollution caused by heavy traffic, despite being less likely to own cars themselves.

We focus our efforts to help people experiencing the worst impacts of car dependency. Targeting journeys of less than five miles, we deliver evidence-based solutions that inspire people to walk, wheel and cycle. By shaping solutions together we can be responsive to the needs of specific communities and create places and spaces that are accessible for everyone.

We also campaign for better policy to make it easier for communities to get about and encouraging drivers to leave the car at home.

We're helping communities come to life by...

Opening active travel hubs around the UK to help people get access to a bike and support them to get cycling.



Working together to make change happen

We work for and with communities, using our voice to achieve lasting impact for everyone.

We're campaigning for reductions in traffic, pavement parking and speed, and for green and public spaces to be accessible to everyone. To achieve this, we're delivering traffic-free and low-traffic routes, streets and neighbourhoods where communities want them most. We're also delivering programmes for schools and workplaces, and strategic support and training to make it easier to walk, wheel and cycle.

We're calling for the creation of neighbourhoods where amenities are within walkable distance, and bringing people with us by sharing advice on shaping new developments.

We're demanding better representation of communities' own specific needs and wants, and demonstrating how this can be achieved through co-designed and co-delivered projects.



We're helping communities come to life by...

Helping workplaces across the country change the way their staff travel to work – and save money by doing so.



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