

The real cycling revolution

How the face of cycling is changing



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Cycling steps up a gear on the National Cycle Network

Sustrans has recorded the biggest ever increase in the number of people cycling on the National Cycle Network, with 40 million more cycling trips made during 2011 than in the year before – an 18% increase. In total 256 million trips were made by bike on the National Cycle Network.

Overall the number of walking and cycling trips made on the Network increased by 15% to 484 million. This contrasts with official statistics from the Department for Transport which shows walking in decline and cycling to be static¹.

And every part of the UK played a role. Cycling increased by 19% on the Network in England, Wales and Scotland, with Northern Ireland seeing a 13% increase. And when it came to walking, Scotland saw a 15% increase, Wales 12%, England 12% and Northern Ireland 8%.

We estimate 3.3 million people used the Network during 2011 (compared to 3 million in 2010), making over 1.3 million trips everyday.



18%

Increase in cycling on the National Cycle Network.



3.3m

People used the National Cycle Network in 2011.

1.3m

Trips everyday.

¹ The National Travel Survey for Great Britain 2010 reported a further decline in walking with levels of cycling remaining static at about 2% of trips. Data for 2011 will not be published until late 2012.

Lower costs, no queues, and free exercise are driving change

Rising petrol prices, higher fares, frustration with traffic jams – all seem to be playing their part. But the fact that the National Cycle Network passes within a mile of over half of us, and that Sustrans has been extending safe walking and cycling routes to schools, to communities and to green spaces ensures that everyone can get about more on foot and bike.

One in five cyclists say that the money saved has encouraged them to get on their bike, nearly double the proportion in 2010. Saving money is far more important for men, however, with over a quarter of male cyclists citing money saved compared to less than 10% of women.

Fitness appears to be more of a motivator for women – two thirds of female cyclists say this is important compared to less than half of male cyclists.

Cycling is seen as a more efficient way of getting around, beating queues and bypassing traffic², with 34% of cyclists on the Network saying that this is an important reason for them using the Network, compared to just 20% the year before.

All this adds up to a lot fewer cars on our roads. 42% of cyclists on the Network could have used a car to make their journey, but chose not to. If all of these journeys had been made by car, 67 million more car journeys³ would have been made on our already busy roads.

Safe and pleasant surroundings are particularly important for getting people back on their bikes, and traffic-free sections are the perfect place to learn or rediscover cycling. Of those who say they are new to or returning to cycling on the Network, 91% agreed that feeling safe encouraged them to use the routes.



42%

of cyclists on the National Cycle Network could have used a car for their journey.

2 Our surveys offer respondents a range of options as to what factors influence them in using the National Cycle Network. One of the choices is journey efficiency which we interpret as implying a more reliable, smooth and less congested journey.

3 Based on average car occupancy of 1.6 people per car trip. This is conservative since car occupancy reduces to 1.2 for commuting trips, and a large number of trips by bike on the Network are for commuting

The National Commuting Network

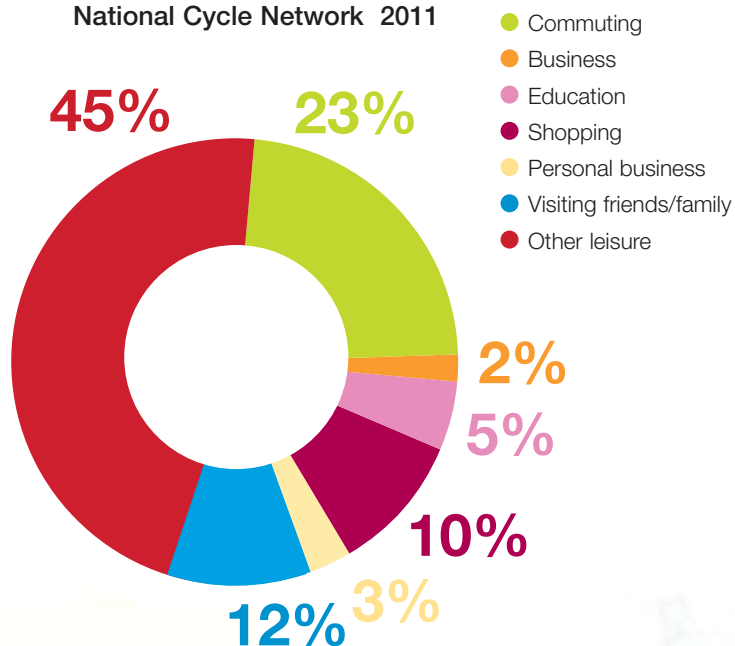
Efficient, convenient, reliable, pleasant surroundings, safe – all these describe getting about on the National Cycle Network. No wonder people want to start their working day by commuting on the Network, collecting a few fresh air miles and some exercise along the way.

A quarter of all journeys on the Network in 2011 were to, or for, work, with cycling accounting for 80% of these.

98 million trips by bike were to work. If each of these had been made by car at average commuter occupancy, there would have been over 81 million additional car journeys on local roads.

And perhaps it's the busyness of our roads that is converting people to commuting by bike or foot – three quarters of commuters say the Network's convenience is why they use it.

Journey purpose on the National Cycle Network 2011



Access for all

Usage of the Network is pretty evenly split between pedestrians and cyclists. Men make more trips than women, but as we extend walking and cycling routes into communities and link children to their schools, the number of women, older people, children and young people getting about on foot and bike is growing.

Women made a quarter of all cycling trips on the Network in 2011, and made 13% more trips by bike than the previous year. Overall women made over 176 million trips on the Network during 2011, but were more likely to be walking than cycling. Convenience, pleasant surroundings, personal fitness and safety are all factors influencing women to use the Network.

When it comes to cycling, 5% of women said they were new to or returning to cycling. The percentage of women using the Network to get to the shops increased, with twice as many choosing to get there by bike in 2011.

More than a quarter of users were over 55 – older people are increasingly making healthy, active lifestyle choices.

And there was an increase in 16-24 year olds using the Network – this age group made more than one in ten trips on the Network, perhaps indicating that car ownership is no longer an automatic step along the road to adulthood⁴. The increase was greatest amongst young women, particularly those cycling. Women aged 16-24 made 65% more trips by bike during 2011 than in the previous year. It would appear that much of this increase comes from walking and cycling to college or university, with 22 million trips in 2011 compared to 14 million in 2010.

Children continue to use the Network to get about and to play. We estimate that over 91 million trips were made by children to school and for pleasure on the Network in 2011 – just under a fifth of all trips.

Over one in 10 cyclists said they were new, returning or occasional cyclists. Personal health and fitness were key reasons people getting back on their bikes.

The Network is incredibly important for those without access to a car. Over 60% of users did not have access to a car to make their journey, and a quarter say they would not have made their trip if they had not been able to use the National Cycle Network.



Women made

13%

more trips by bike than the previous year.



Women aged 16-24 made

65%

more trips by bike during 2011 than in the previous year.

⁴ Car ownership has fallen markedly amongst this age group compared with figures from the 1990's
<http://assets.dft.gov.uk/statistics/releases/national-travel-survey-2010/nts2010-02.pdf>



Smarter, healthier, cleaner, cheaper

Nearly 60% of people in the UK live within a mile of the National Cycle Network. Safe walking and cycling routes should be available for everyone, and lower speed limits on streets where we live, work and play mean more people can choose to walk and cycle from their front door. And investment in walking and cycling is money well spent. Traffic-free walking and cycling routes pay back four times more than they cost over just a decade – a far higher return on investment than other transport initiatives, and over a much shorter period.

Using the World Health Organisation's tool, developed with Sustrans, for measuring the health benefits of walking and cycling, the estimated annual health benefit to all those using the Network in 2011 was £442 million.

Walking and cycling to work, the shops, or school is the easiest way to incorporate physical activity into increasingly busy lives. No wonder 59% of adult users on the Network achieved their recommended levels of activity of half an hour or more on at least five days a week, compared to the UK average of just a third.

Zero emission journeys are the norm on the Network, with eight in 10 journeys made only by foot or bike. By contrast, if all the journeys made on the Network during 2011 had been by car, the potential CO₂ emitted during the year would have been 760,363 tonnes, at a cost of £40 million.

Since 2000, when we first began monitoring usage of the Network, we have seen an increase every year in levels of cycling and walking.

Cycling in particular has seen huge growth. Since 2000 the number of trips by bike on the Network has increased by over 500%. Over the same period official data shows that the proportion of trips made by bike has decreased by over 20%⁵. One of the reasons is that government statistics are likely to substantially underestimate data from traffic-free sections of the National Cycle Network. This and the small number of cyclists in the sample overall means that the National Travel Survey is significantly under-recording levels of cycling. During 2011, for instance, 180 million trips by bike were made on traffic-free

sections of the National Cycle Network, nearly a fifth of the total number of cycling trips officially recorded in the whole of Britain during 2010. If all these trips were included in official data there would be a far more positive picture of cycling in the UK.

This is the learning from the National Cycle Network. If we want a cycling revolution, and to see more people walking, then we need to give people the choice by making it safer, more pleasant and far more convenient to get about on foot and bike.

The Times Cities Fit for Cycling Campaign suggests that 2% of the Highways Authority budget (£100 million a year) invested in cycling would massively increase cycling levels, particularly in urban areas where the majority of people live. In 2010 the Netherlands spent €30 per head on cycling, nearly £400 million nationally at today's exchange rates⁶.



60%

Nearly 60% of people in the UK live within a mile of the National Cycle Network.



£442m

estimated annual health benefit to all those using the Network in 2011.



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4 Car ownership has fallen markedly amongst this age group compared with figures from the 1990's <http://assets.dft.gov.uk/statistics/releases/national-travel-survey-2010/nts2010-02.pdf>

5 The National Travel Survey 2010 shows a downward trend in walking since 1995, with cycling having recovered slightly from an all time low in 2007, but with fewer trips by bike in 2010 than 1995.

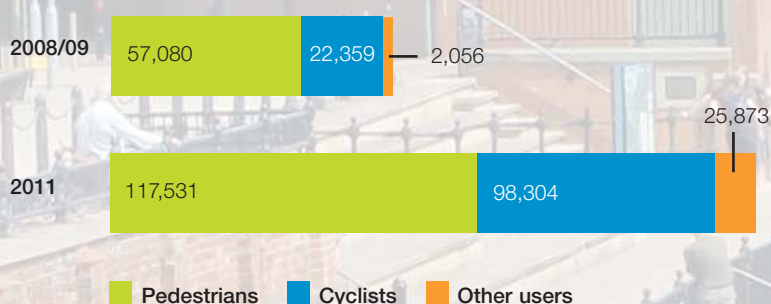
6 The Fietsberaad reports that the Dutch Government now spends €487 million on cycling a year – with a population of about 16 million this equates to €30. <http://www.fietsberaad.nl/index.cfm?lang=nl§ion=nieuws&mode=newsArticle&repository=Jaarlijks+487+miljoen+euro+voor+de+fiets> – in 2009 a quarter of all trips in the Netherlands were made by bike.

Getting Manchester moving

Sustrans has recently completed work to provide a safe walking and cycling path along a canal towpath between Sale and Stretford in Greater Manchester, crossing the M60 and providing an alternative to using the busy and often congested A56 that runs parallel.

As a result the number of people using this section of National Cycle Network has risen dramatically.

Annual usage estimate 2008-2011



The increase in commuting is particularly striking. A survey on the Stretford section of the route reveals that half of all trips are now made by people going to work, a ten-fold increase from just fewer than 8,000 to over 80,000.

Opening up of the canal towpath has also meant more children are able to walk and cycle the school run:

'In the summer, we will definitely all be coming to school by bike, the kids like it because it's a bit different, they have been hassling me to let them ride in for quite a while.'

'I like walking to school by the canal as my brother is at senior school and he can get there by the canal too – on a Wednesday morning, when I come early to school for the breakfast club, we get to walk together for ten minutes. We have a chat, it's not for very long, but it's nice to come together.'

'It took longer for me to get to school by the main roads; I used to have to set off at 07.45 am, now I leave at 08.30 am. It's much better now that we can walk along the canal.'

Linking communities in rural Scotland

Sustrans has invested significantly in community links, like the one between Cambus and Alloa,⁷ creating a traffic-free walking and cycling route between two communities, which we've continued to develop and maintain.

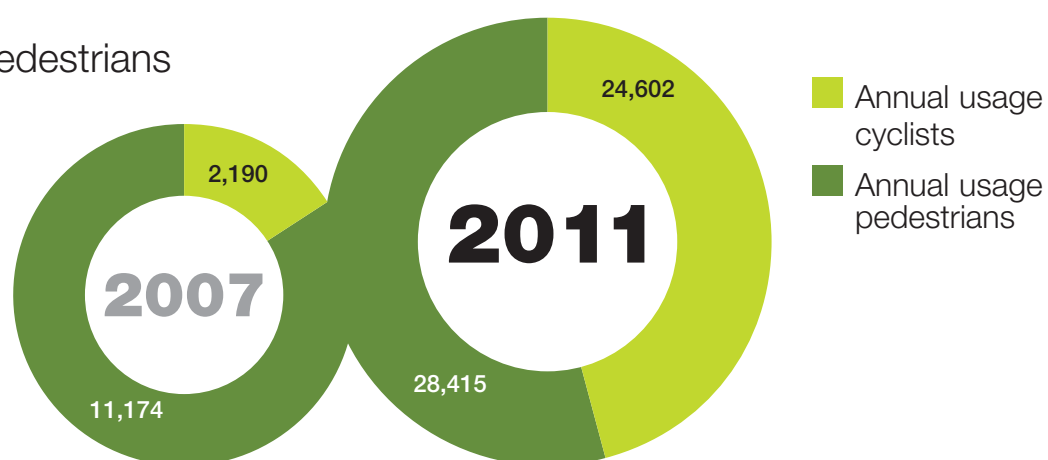
The impact has been enormous. Women, children and older people are all benefiting from better access, with nearly half of users saying that without the new community route, they just wouldn't have made the journey. And the kinds of journeys being made have changed – in amongst leisure and commuting journeys there are now trips to the shop, to school and to college.

Unsurprisingly safety, the pleasant surroundings, and the convenience of walking and cycling now are the reasons most frequently given for using the route.

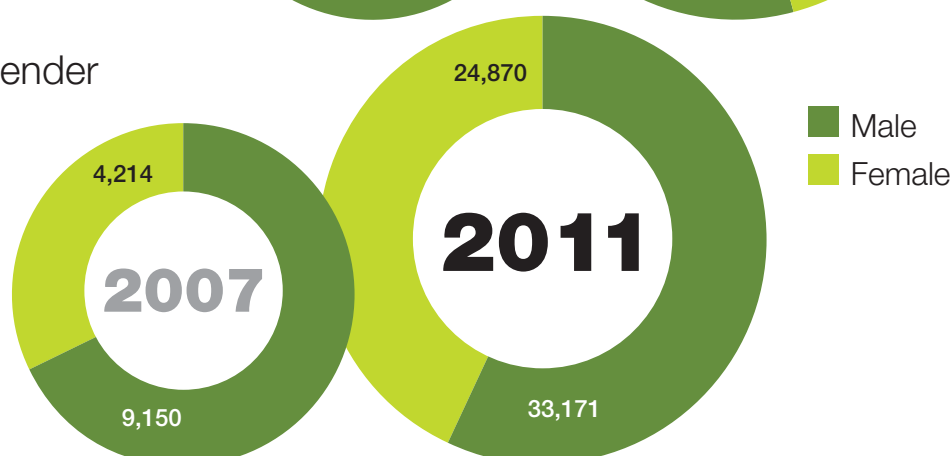
2007 The estimated total annual usage between Cambus and Alloa in 2007 was **13,364** users.

2011 The current estimated total annual usage between Cambus and Alloa is **58,041** users.

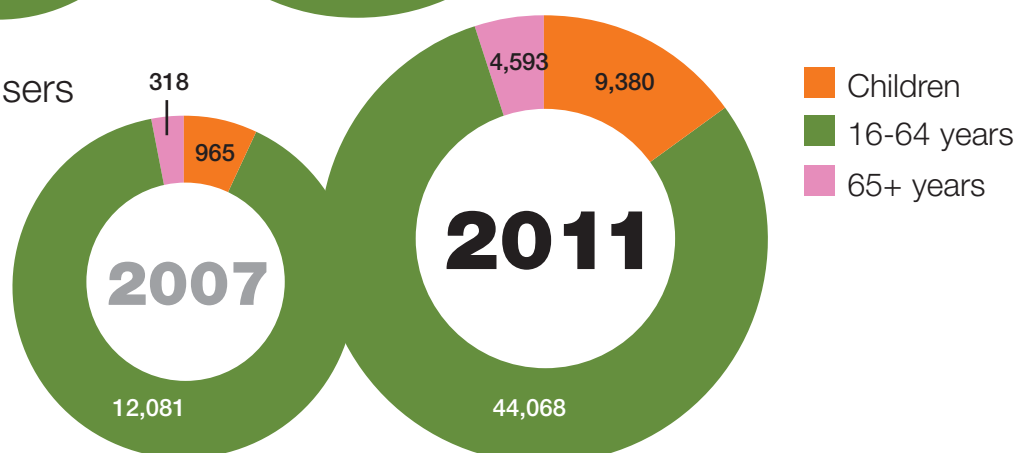
Cyclists and pedestrians



Gender



Age of users



⁷ Our funding partners for this work were Transport Scotland and Clackmannanshire Council.

Reconnecting the people of Newport

A former dead-end for cyclists has connected Newport City Centre and its new university campus to historical Caerleon and the campus there. A new bridge over the railway has also linked schools to residential areas and the centre of Caerleon.

The improvements have lead to a big increase in walking and cycling, and a survey of users at the Caerleon end of the link has revealed more journeys being made to work, to school and college, and for shopping. Children are making twice as many trips, and there has been a five-fold increase in walking and cycling by people over 65, particularly women.

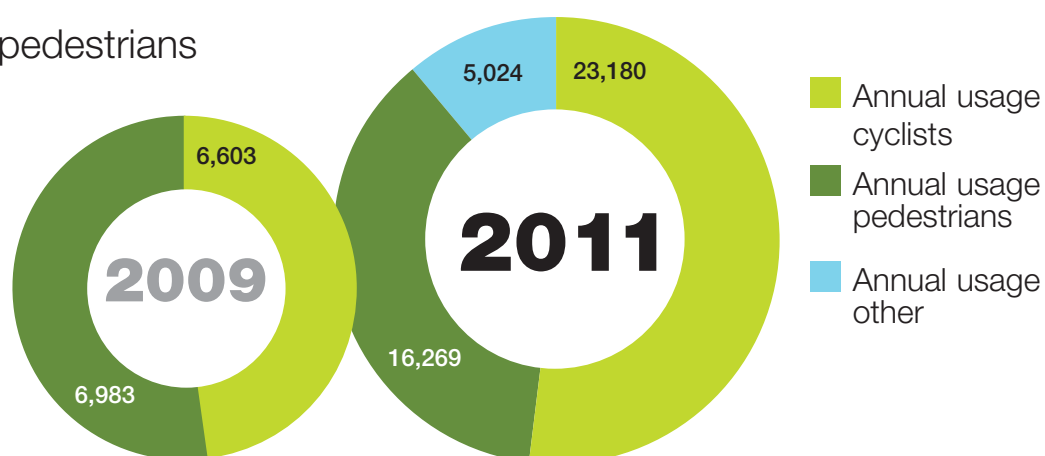
2009

The estimated total annual usage in Newport 2009 was **14,139** users.

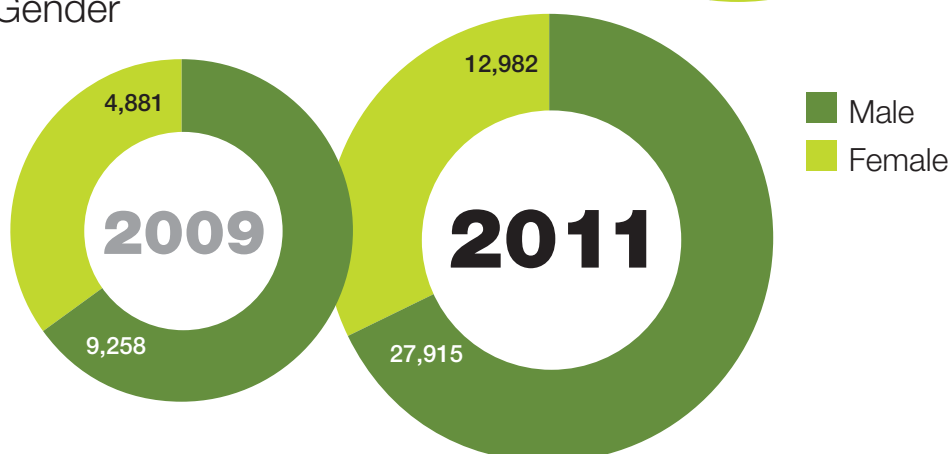
2011

The current estimated total annual usage in is **40,896** users.

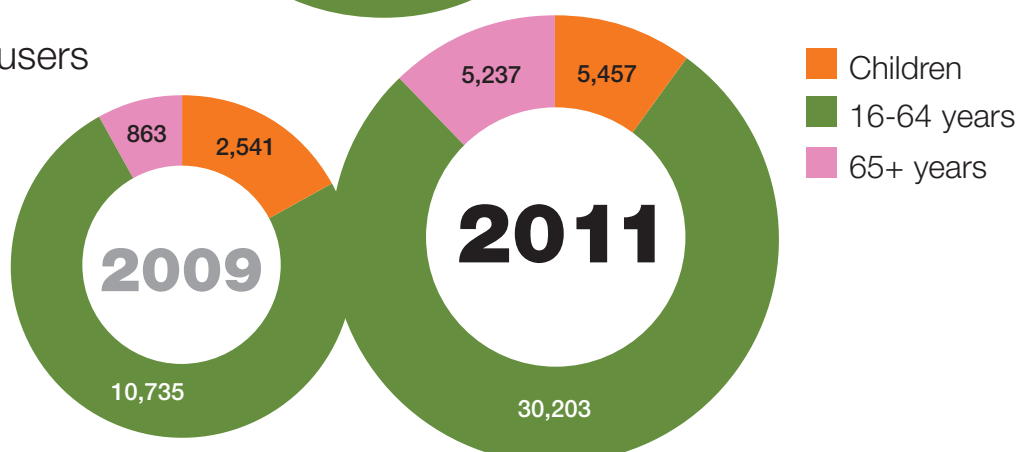
Cyclists and pedestrians



Gender



Age of users



Cycling the school run

At just seven years-old, Fraser Dixon was presented with a trophy for completing 1,000 miles by bike to Exminster Community Primary. Now eight, he has cycled to school every single day since he was five, with dad Steve and with younger brother Matthew on the tag-a-long.

Fraser's cycling exploits are well known by everyone in the school – he has received his bronze, silver and gold medals for cycling 100 times to school and won the Sustrans New Years Resolution competition. And he loves to cycle

“... cycling in the fresh air is healthy and helps save the earth... [it] also helps with my fitness for football, swimming and gymnastics.”

Steve agrees. **“I tell him cycling is cheaper, Fraser comes home from school and tells me about the benefits of cycling, how it's good for your health and the environment.”**

After dropping Fraser off, Steve takes Matthew to his pre-school, so gets in a good 12 miles in a day. And it doesn't stop there for the Dixons, who also get out and about on Sustrans' nearby National Cycle Network:

“We always cycle at weekends – we recently did a lovely ride from Exmouth to Budleigh Salterton on the disused railway path. I do the shopping by bike and put it in my panniers, it is easier and cheaper as you don't need to find a car park or get stuck in traffic – I just go along the canal.”

Jennet Young, Learning Support Officer at Cefn Cribwr Primary School in Bridgend, began cycling after her daughter started to cycle through Sustrans.

“It has inspired me to join her as I have bought a new bike through the bike-to-work scheme, as we enjoy riding to school as a family. I can now also join the rest of my family on bike picnics and general cycling.

“Also the current price of petrol has influenced my decision to move from using my car to a bike as the cost of fuel is taking up a large proportion of the family budget. Cycling has also improved my fitness and makes me feel better for taking more exercise



Getting back in the saddle

After cycling for the first time in years whilst on holiday, Josie Butler decided to buy a bike. However, as she felt she needed some company to increase her confidence, she joined Silver Cyclists, a group that meets once a week for a two hour ride.

The group was part of a project set up by Sustrans and Stockton Borough Council to run free cycling courses for people over 50, covering bike maintenance, advice on choosing the right bike and route planning and running guided rides on local sections of National Cycle Network.

Over the past year, Josie's cycling skills and fitness have improved so that she can now manage a 20-mile round trip without feeling tired. Having suffered from osteoporosis, Josie was delighted when her GP said that she no longer needed medication, and that her increase in exercise had helped.

"I feel a lot better and I've lost a bit of weight too. The group was very welcoming – it was a good way to meet people and make friends. I really feel part of something and I look forward to our weekly rides."

"Cycling gives you independence and the group has given me the confidence to do things I wouldn't have thought of doing."



A chain reaction?

The image of cycling is changing. Although we still hear a lot about cyclists being selfish, dangerous road users, research conducted by Sustrans with Orange with their Do Some Good app reveals a different perception. Fitness conscious, rebellious, environmentally aware – these are how those completing the survey saw cyclists. This backs up research published in 2010 that showed that 42% of the British public thought cycling was ‘cool’⁷. Whilst most of those responding had access to a bike, only a minority were using them more than once a week.

Slower speeds and more dedicated investment in cycle lanes were what people wanted to enable them to get about more by bike. And whilst most people didn’t see themselves cycling everyday, they wanted to be able to get out by bike far more, with half wanting to be able to cycle to work.



42%

of the British public thought cycling was ‘cool’.

Where from here?

The National Cycle Network is demonstrating that big increases in walking and cycling are possible, and that people will choose to get about on foot and bike if it’s safe and pleasant enough.

But with rising levels of obesity and ill health due to inactivity, and ever-increasing petrol prices, we urgently need to make sure everyone can choose to travel actively. We need to see two things happen to ensure people can make smarter travel choices:

- area-wide 20mph speed limits in residential and built-up areas
- dedicated investment in making walking and cycling the norm for local journeys.

⁷ A team of academics at the Bristol Social Marketing Centre at the University of the West of England commissioned YouGov to undertake a UK wide survey investigating the opinions about cycling amongst a representative UK sample of adults - 3,885 people aged 16-64 were interviewed in early summer 2010.

Methodology

This report is derived from a range of data sources. These include continuous cycle counters, route user surveys, manual user counts, other user surveys, and central government data sources. Sustrans would like to take this opportunity to thank all partners that have contributed to the National Cycle Network monitoring programme. Those requiring more information on any part of this report, or wishing to become involved in the programme should contact Sustrans' Research and Monitoring Unit researchandmonitoring@sustrans.org.uk

Measuring changes in the levels of cycling

Sustrans has been collating data from local authority networks of automated continuous cycle counters throughout the UK for several years. This data is the basis for expressions of the changing levels of cycle use. A sample of over 300 counters formed the basis for the 2011 change measurement. An independent review of analytical techniques has been undertaken.

Estimating total National Cycle Network use

A complex model is used to generate estimates of National Cycle Network usage. Figures for usage on different types of routes, combined with the figures describing changes in levels of cycling, form the basis for national level aggregation. The process used this year is consistent with that used since 2005. Pedestrian use of road adjacent routes is not assigned as Network use. An independent review of the model has been undertaken.

Profiling the use of the Network

Profiles of National Cycle Network usage are derived from route user surveys. Sustrans holds a database of over 35,000 face-to-face interviews with route users collected over the past nine years. Survey response data is weighted on the basis of concurrent local user counts and national Network usage estimates, in-line with the recommendations of an independent review of the survey process.

Case studies

The case studies presented are derived from count, survey and evaluation data collected by Sustrans and our partners.

Future reporting

We are always seeking to improve our methodology for interpreting the data we collect. Over the coming years we particularly wish to:

- improve the sophistication of cycle usage estimation based on better modelling of count data.
- generate better 'levels of change' data for cycling activity.
- enhance our understanding of pedestrian activity on road-adjacent routes.



About Sustrans

Sustrans makes smarter travel choices possible, desirable and inevitable. We're a leading UK charity enabling people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of the journeys we make every day. We work with families, communities, policy-makers and partner organisations so that people are able to choose healthier, cleaner and cheaper journeys, with better places and spaces to move through and live in.

It's time we all began making smarter travel choices. Make your move and support Sustrans today. www.sustrans.org.uk

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Sustrans and the National Cycle Network

Sustrans began work on co-ordinating the National Cycle Network in 1995 having successfully secured the first grant made by the newly established lottery through the Millennium Commission.

Our ambition was to create space in every community in the UK that would enable people of all ages and abilities to walk and cycle for more of their everyday journeys. We wanted to demonstrate that it was possible to reverse the downward trend in walking and cycling levels if investment was made in creating the kind of public space that makes travelling by foot and bike pleasant, convenient and safe.

17 years later, and the Network now extends to 13,600 miles of signed routes with a third on traffic-free paths and the rest following quieter lanes or traffic-calmed roads. The number of trips by foot and bike has grown every year on the National Cycle Network since we began recording usage in 2000. The most popular sections are those that are traffic-free.

We work with every local authority and council in the UK to develop and maintain the Network which now passes within a mile of over half of the population of the UK. But to succeed in making walking and, particularly, cycling a realistic choice for more journeys we, and our many partners, need to do far more to bring a safe and pleasant environment to the streets outside our front door.

That's why Sustrans is seeking to make 20 miles per hour or less the speed limit in residential and built-up areas, and why we are advocating far more dedicated investment to make walking and cycling a realistic choice for travelling to everyday destinations such as schools, stations, shops and work.