



**ASHFORD
CYCLING &
WALKING
STRATEGY**
2019-2029





CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Benefits of Cycling and Walking	6
The Local Transport Plan	9
Cycling Trends in Ashford	8
Ashford's Corporate Strategy	11
A picture of Cycling and Walking in Ashford today	12
Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP)	14
Our Ambitions	15
Overall Aim of the Cycling and Walking Strategy	16
Over-arching principles	17
The Delivery Plan	23
Funding	23
Partnerships	23
Appendix – Delivery Plan	24

INTRODUCTION

The Ashford Cycling and Walking Strategy brings together policies and related actions to promote walking and cycling and the delivery of related infrastructure in Ashford Borough with the aim of increasing the proportion of journeys made by these active travel modes

The Strategy provides a basis for making bids for improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure in Ashford Borough.

The Strategy will help to secure support for walking and cycling for other possible funding streams eg. Developer funding via s106 obligations and CIL

The emphasis of the Strategy has been on identifying the improvements required to deliver a comprehensive and well connected walking and cycling network which will help to make both cycling and walking more attractive for journeys within the borough.

The Ashford urban area is served by an excellent network of cycleways and footpaths, many of which are based along the existing river corridors and have been delivered as part of the green corridor project

The number of cyclists using the routes to commute to the station has increased significantly so there is already a significant amount of existing infrastructure in place and a key challenge is to increase awareness and promote its use whilst also making sure the infrastructure is improved and extended where possible.

The Strategy also seeks to increase cycling participation for recreation and leisure and daily journeys by promoting cycling as a key priority, providing new facilities and enhancing existing facilities and promoting local participatory events.



BENEFITS OF CYCLING AND WALKING

In towns and cities across Britain, increasingly cycling and walking are becoming more and more popular and is regarded as the preferred means of travel – it is a quick, easy and green way of getting around – whether for work, going to school , or simply leisure and fitness.



HEALTH – by making cycling and walking the norm and incorporating it into everyday life, particularly in making short trips, this improves physical activity and fitness, and contributes to the promotion of healthy lifestyles.



ENVIRONMENT – cycling and walking are low impact, zero emissions means of getting from A to B and by replacing car journeys with trips by bike it will help to improve air quality and create a better living environment.



TRANSPORT – travelling by bike can help to reduce congestion and free up road space for businesses and other road users.



SOCIAL INCLUSION – cycling and walking provide an affordable way of getting around for people who do not have access to a private car.



SUSTAINABLE GROWTH – building cycling and walking infrastructure into new developments can make sure that they are fully integrated into the developments from the outset and ensure that they are linked to the wider network of existing and proposed routes .



SAFETY – the more people who travel by bike, the more it helps to change the perception of cycling as a means of travel.



TOURISM – promoting cycling and walking tourism benefits related businesses – cafes and pubs, local attractions benefited such as museums and historic houses and accommodation providers. It can also lead to the promotion of local businesses catering for the needs of cyclists.

4%

In 2013, 4% of UK residents said they cycled at least once a day

43%

This compares to 43% in the Netherlands where 27% of all trips are made by bike



and where in cities such as Utrecht that has a population of 345,000, 125,000 people use a bike on a daily basis

3%

Currently only 3% of trips in Ashford are made by bike

6%

The target for the Strategy is to increase that to 6% over its lifetime

The Government's targets to reach by 2025 are:

- Double cycling from 0.8 billion to 1.6 billion stages (a stage is a unit of travel when there is a change in the mode of transport ie. a journey cycling to a railway station to catch the train to work is one cycle stage. This allows cycling and walking to be included and counted in journeys when they are not the main mode.)
- Increase walking to 300 stages per person per year
- Reduce the number of cyclists killed or injured each year
- Increase the percentage of school children (5-10 years) that walk to school from 49% to 55%

By 2040 the government's ambition for cycling and walking is to deliver,

BETTER SAFETY

'A safe and reliable way to travel for short journeys'

- streets where cyclists and walkers feel they belong, and are safe
- better connected communities
- safer traffic speeds, with lower speed limits where appropriate to the local area
- cycle training opportunities for all children

BETTER STREETS

'Places that have cycling and walking at their heart'

- places designed for people of all abilities and ages so they can choose to walk or cycle with ease
- improved public realm
- better planning for walking and cycling
- more community-based activities, such as led rides and play streets where local places want them
- a wider green network of paths, routes and open spaces

BETTER MOBILITY

'More people cycling and walking – easy, normal and enjoyable'

- more high quality cycling facilities
- more urban areas that are considered walkable
- rural roads which provide improved safety for walking and cycling
- more networks of routes around public transport hubs and town centres, with safe paths along busy roads
- better links to schools and workplaces
- technological innovations that can promote more and safer walking and cycling
- behaviour change opportunities to support increased walking and cycling
- better integrated routes for those with disabilities or health conditions

THE LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN

The Local Transport Plan – Delivering Growth Without Gridlock 2016-2031 – identifies the transport priorities for Kent through appropriate strategies, policies and action plans. The LTP specifically seeks to deliver a safer road, footway and cycleway network to reduce the likelihood of casualties, to deliver schemes that reduce the environmental footprint of transport, and to provide and promote active travel choices for all members of the community to encourage good health and wellbeing, and implement measures to improve local air quality.

The LTP aims to make active travel – which means walking or cycling as a means of transport rather than for leisure purposes – an attractive and realistic choice for short journeys. It can benefit health and wellbeing by incorporating physical activity into everyday routine as well as reduce the number of vehicles on the road and improve air quality.

KCC manages a network of 7,000km of public rights of way. People use this network to access the countryside, as a means to enjoy beautiful landscapes, to improve their health and wellbeing,

and to support the rural economy. Much of the network still fulfils the purpose from which it evolved: providing motor-vehicle free access to schools, public transport hubs and local amenities. It has been demonstrated that walking, cycling and access to green spaces improves overall health – including lowering blood pressure, reducing stress, and improving mental health. Further, the attraction of these routes draws visitors to Kent, and countryside recreational activities benefit the local economy, which in turn supports essential services in rural areas.

The LTP specifically identifies Ashford as a Cycling Town. The delivery of an improving cycle network and the doubling of cycle parking at Ashford International Station in 2015 (as well as its 2010 Station of the Year award in the National Cycle Rail Awards) provide opportunities to capitalise on the use of this mode of transport.



ASHFORD'S CORPORATE STRATEGY

Ashford's Five Year Corporate Plan 2015 – 2020 sets out the Council's direction and key priorities and specifically highlights the importance of sustainable modes of transport and in particular includes two priorities below.

PRIORITY 3 - ACTIVE AND CREATIVE ASHFORD – Healthy Choices through Physical, Cultural and Leisure Engagement – develop a “cycle town” strategy.

PRIORITY 4 – ATTRACTIVE ASHFORD – Countryside and Townscape, Tourism and Heritage – Develop cycle town strategy and connections between green spaces via cycle and footpath links.



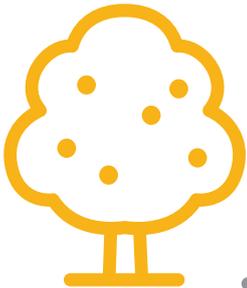
LOCAL CYCLING AND WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLANS (LCWIP)

Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs), as set out in the Government's Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy, are a new, strategic approach to identifying cycling and walking improvements required at the local level.

They enable a long-term approach to developing local cycling and walking networks, ideally over a 10 year period, and form a vital part of the Government's strategy to increase the number of trips made on foot or by bicycle.

The Borough Council was part of a Department of Transport pilot project to trial the preparation of LCWIPs and received support from consultants to analyse local census data to establish the most heavily used cycling and walking routes where key improvements would secure the greatest benefits. The key routes are set out in the delivery plan.

While the preparation of LCWIPs is non-mandatory, it has been indicated by the DfT that those local authorities who have plans will be well placed to make the case for future investment.



OUR AMBITIONS

- Ashford Borough is recognised as a cycling and walking friendly borough
- Cycling and walking routes are high quality, safe, accessible, well maintained, integrated, signed and promoted
- More people are cycling and walking for everyday journeys
- There are more opportunities for sustainable travel to work, school and key services and reliance on cars is reduced
- Drivers are more aware of and considerate towards cyclists and walkers
- Cyclists and walkers are more aware of their rights and responsibilities to other road and path users
- Off road cycling and walking networks are maintained and improved
- Cycling and walking contribute to the visitor economy
- To secure a significant modal shift from cars to cycling and walking to reduce air pollution and carbon emissions and improve overall air quality.



OVERALL AIM OF THE CYCLING AND WALKING STRATEGY



To encourage walking and cycling as the natural choices for shorter journeys in Ashford Borough – or as part of a longer journey – regardless of age, gender, fitness level or income.



OVER-ARCHING PRINCIPLES

1 PROVIDING AND IMPROVING THE CYCLING AND WALKING NETWORK

New routes will be provided as safe, continuous links between communities and popular destinations such as shops, schools, leisure centres and work places. New developments will be expected to deliver cycling and walking routes within them and provide linkages to the wider network including sections of the National Cycling Network.

Principle 1 – A network of high quality cycling and walking routes will be completed or improved in Ashford town, Tenterden, Charing, Hamstreet and Wye. This will connect with the Borough-wide network of cycle and pedestrian routes including the National Cycling Network. Detailed recommendations for new and improved routes can be found in the Appendix (p24) of this report.

Principle 2 – Wherever possible measures will be provided which give cyclists and pedestrians priority over motorised traffic in terms of accessibility and journey time.

2 CYCLE PARKING

Cycle parking needs to be convenient, safe and secure and there is a specific requirement in the Ashford Local Plan (policy TRA6) that it is provided as part of new development. Cycle parking can be complemented by related facilities for cyclists including secure storage or drying facilities for clothing and equipment and can incorporate showers and changing facilities.

Cycling can form part of longer journeys if there is good integration with public transport and high quality, safe and secure cycle parking is essential to this. There is substantial cycle parking provision at Ashford Station that was extended and increased in 2015. The existing station cycle parking is extremely well used on a daily basis and this has been complemented by the Brompton Dock cycle hire scheme. Cycle parking at other public transport hubs should be well provided and should be kept under review.

Principle 3 – Cycle parking/storage will be provided in all developments in accordance with Policy TRA6 of the Ashford Local Plan and at key public transport links and all public buildings.

3 MAINTENANCE OF THE EXISTING NETWORK

There is extensive existing network of cycleways and pedestrian routes throughout the Borough that unless they are maintained to an appropriate standard will quickly fall into disrepair and will be difficult to use. It is imperative that the network is maintained with structural maintenance and more regular cleansing and cutting back of vegetation. This also includes ensuring that roads frequented by cyclists are maintained, with whipping branches and vegetation kept cut back. Similarly, there is a need to improve and provide appropriate signage and way-marking and lighting that is appropriate for its location.

Principle 4 – The Borough Council will work with its partners to ensure the regular maintenance of all cycle tracks and pedestrian routes within the Borough.

4 SAFER CYCLING

A key barrier to the increase in cycling within the Borough is the perception of relative safety of bicycle users on existing routes and roads. There are a number of ways in which this can be tackled including considering detailed design and layout of new routes or adapting existing routes. Cycling to school is an important consideration as it promotes healthier lifestyles, can reduce congestion and establishes a long term commitment to cycling so paths and routes to schools are important as well as traffic calming around schools. Equally bike handling training for children is important to increase confidence and Bikeability training comprises three levels of competency based training and has been supported for some time by the Borough Council.

Principle 5 – The Borough Council will ensure that the safety of cyclists is considered as a priority in the provision of new routes and the adaptation and re-configuration of existing routes, particularly around existing and proposed schools. The Borough Council is committed to its support of the roll out of Bikeability training within the Borough.



5 PROMOTING CYCLING AND WALKING IN ASHFORD

Ashford town has one of the best developed network of cycleways/footpaths in Kent that has developed over a number of years but the perception is that the network is not as well used as it should be and is not being used to its full potential. It is essential therefore that there is more promotion of the positive benefits of cycling and walking and alternative means of travel.

It is essential that cycling and walking are actively promoted otherwise the use of cycle routes and footpaths is unlikely to increase. The 'Explore Kent' and 'Visit Kent' initiatives provide useful information on cycling and walking routes in the Borough. The Borough Council's website will be kept up to date with information regarding cycling and walking within the Borough. All cycleways and footpaths will be fully signposted and local clubs and cycle shops could help to promote cycling within the borough. The Council will ensure that its published information regarding cycling and walking is kept up to date.

Principle 6 – Ensure cycleways and pedestrian routes are fully advertised and appropriately signposted and cycling and walking mapping is available for all routes.

6 TOURISM

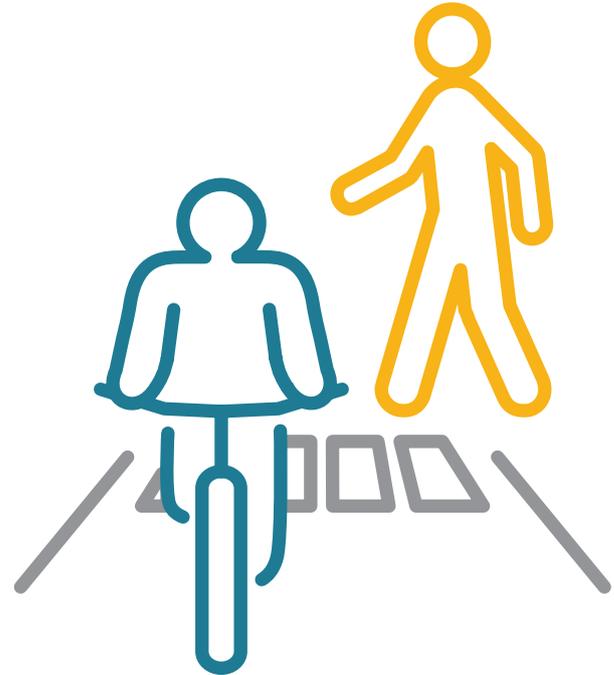
Cycling and walking can be an important source of tourism and in particular there are cycling opportunities within the Borough that could be exploited as part of an improved visitor offer.

The proposal to upgrade the existing public right of way which runs parallel to the Royal Military Canal to a shared path/cycleway, is an ambitious project that will provide a unique opportunity to travel through the rural Romney Marsh area in a healthy and sustainable manner. By upgrading and promoting the route it will encourage healthy lifestyles for people of all abilities; encourage managed access to the countryside by working with local landowners and partner agencies; encourage visitors and tourists to the area which will benefit existing local businesses and potentially encourage new businesses to develop; help to celebrate and promote the unique heritage of the area and enjoy the unique and diverse wildlife in the area.

This multi-faceted project that will deliver against the following corporate priorities: **Corporate Priority 1 – Enterprising Ashford** by stimulating interest in the rural economy and support for allied businesses. **Corporate Priority 3 – Active and Creative Ashford** by encouraging physical activity and engagement in cultural and leisure activities. **Corporate Priority 4 – Attractive Ashford** by strengthening the local tourism offer for the Romney Marsh and surrounding areas, as well as linking to associated tourism providers further afield in the Borough.

Ashford Borough Council is keen to work with landowners and stakeholders to ensure a sympathetic and sustainable route is created that can eventually join with existing and proposed sections of the Royal Military Canal shared pathway along its entire 28 mile length.

Principle 7 – The Borough Council will support and promote cycling and walking projects that contribute to the overall tourism offer in the Borough.





THE DELIVERY PLAN

The delivery plan sets out the proposed projects that are required to enable the Strategy to be implemented and sets out the long term, local approach to deliver cycling and walking projects in the Borough over the lifetime of the Strategy.

It focusses on enabling cycling and walking for everyday journeys to reduce the reliance on car travel and create confident, active and healthy communities. It is focused on the six over-arching principles set out previously.

- Providing and Improving the cycling and walking network
- Cycle Parking
- Maintenance of the Existing Network
- Safer Cycling
- Promoting Cycling and Walking in Ashford
- Tourism

FUNDING

The draft Strategy proposes the initial funding of projects in the town centre and rural areas. In recent years there have been significant central government initiatives to promote cycling and walking with substantial funding available to identified locations. The Council's Strategy and in particular the Council's participation in the DfT Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan process means that the Council will be best placed to take advantage of further central government funding for cycling and walking infrastructure.

PARTNERSHIPS

There are clearly some keep partner organisations that can assist with project implementation.

- Department for Transport
- Sustrans
- Parish and Town Councils
- Kent County Council
- Relevant landowners

A PICTURE OF CYCLING AND WALKING IN ASHFORD TODAY

Ashford has shown the greatest percentage increase in the number of residents cycling to work over the period 2001-2011 at 8%. In overall terms, the total number of residents cycling to work was second only numerically to Canterbury – a university city of course which typically has higher numbers of cyclists.

In 2017, nationally the average person made 17 cycling trips and cycled 60 miles, made 2% of all their trips by cycling and covered just 1% of all their distance. Nationally, interestingly the most common purpose for cycling trips was commuting/business (37%) followed by cycling for leisure (36%).

Ashford actually has one of the best developed network of cycleways in Kent with a mixture of off road dedicated routes and on road segregated road space.

The Ashford Local Plan 2030 in policy TRA5 states that

Development proposals shall demonstrate how safe and accessible pedestrian access and movement routes will be delivered and how they will connect to the wider movement network. Opportunities should be proactively taken to connect with and enhance Public Rights of Way whenever possible, encouraging journeys on foot.



8%

of residents cycling to work over the 10 years between 2001-2011

The Ashford Local Plan 2030 in policy TRA6 specifically seeks to improve conditions for cyclists through the following measures

- Promoting and developing a Borough-wide network of cycle routes
- Developments should, where opportunities arise, include safe, convenient and attractively designed cycle routes, including, where possible, connection to the Borough Wide cycle network
- Promoting and providing cycle parking facilities in town centres, at railways stations and at major public buildings, and requiring new development to provide cycle parking facilities in agreement with the Council
- Taking opportunities to consider active travel when designing new routes and establishing connections with existing routes, encouraging journeys by bike

The green corridor network of routes in the Ashford urban area has enabled the establishment of key pedestrian and cycleway links through the town. There has been an increase in cycling commuting principally to the station taking advantage of the

network of off road routes. National Cycle Route NCN18 crosses the Borough in a linking rural Tenterden to the Ashford urban area and then out to the north and Wye in the direction of Canterbury. National Cycle Route 17 also is within the Borough boundary.

There have also been significant off-road dedicated cycle routes built and provided which have helped to improve connectivity and accessibility. Principally the South Willesborough Dykes route now links Park Farm to the international Station and in the rural area there is an off-road link from Godmersham and Chilham (part of NCN18).

The Council has worked closely with Sustrans who have carried out an extensive audit of the existing routes in the Ashford, Tenterden, Charing, Hamstreet and Wye. Those audits form the basis of the proposed improvements and projects in the delivery plan.

There are four dedicated cycle clubs within the Borough with large memberships promoting recreational cycling at all levels together with sporting activities related to two triathlon clubs.

APPENDIX – DELIVERY PLAN

1. Providing and Improving the Cycling and Walking Network

Project	Delivery Lead and Partners	Priority (H/M/L)
<p>Audit and assess priority routes, networks in smaller settlements and key routes linking them using DfT's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, and Living Streets School Route and Community Street Audits</p> <p>Routes including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ashford Town Centre • Tenterden – provision of a network of pedestrian/cycle routes building on existing routes and providing routes as part of new development – TENT1A and B • Wye • Charing • Hamstreet – provision of a network of pedestrian/cycle routes for the village as part of the Sustrans report findings – linking to the Royal Military Canal project <p>Ashford circular route – long term project to provide a linked network of pedestrian/cycle routes around the Ashford urban area that builds on existing routes but provide new routes as part of new development – Chilmington Green / Court Lodge / South of Kingsnorth / Park Farm / Park Farm South East / Cheesemans Green / Finberry / Waterbrook/ Sevington / Willesborough Lees/ Conningbrook/ Kennington site S2 / Eureka</p>	<p>ABC, Parish and Town Councils, KCC, Sustrans,</p>	<p>H</p>

Project	Delivery Lead and Partners	Priority (H/M/L)
Carry out feasibility and outline design for LCWIPs in and between key settlements focussing on key routes as follows: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Beaver Road, Victoria Way and Jemmett Road areas 2 Repton – tank r/b through Godinton Road 3 Highworth School r/b to Lidl and off to Magazine Road areas 4 Canterbury Road to Magazine Road and Green Corridor (Ashford Rugby Club) areas 5 Hythe Road to Mace Lane and green corridor to Mabledown Road areas 6 Newtown Road from Outlet Centre to and from the station areas 	ABC, Parish and Town Councils, KCC, Sustrans,	H
Conningbrook – Wye cycleway – provision of a dedicated off road cycle / pedestrian route linking the Conningbrook country park and associated residential development and the village of Wye that will improve accessibility to and from Wye and link into the wider rural network and connect to cycleway links to Canterbury	ABC, KCC, Wye PC	H
Charing Heath – Charing Greenway – provision of a dedicated cycle/ pedestrian “green-way” between Charing Heath and Charing to improve accessibility to the village	ABC, KCC, Charing PC	H
Replace expired monitoring-counters at 10 sites and install permanent counters at 10 additional sites	KCC	H
Produce LCWIP for Ashford Town Centre	ABC	H
Embed LCWIP in the Ashford Planning tool	ABC, KCC, Charing PC	H
Secure funding through LCWIPs from developers via Section 106	ABC, KCC	H

Project	Delivery Lead and Partners	Priority (H/M/L)
Require that new developments and new roads include best practice pedestrian and cycling routes which are direct, well designed and permeable, take priority over motor traffic and are well connected to surrounding networks	ABC, KCC, developers	H
Require new workplace buildings to have Travel Plans which are active travel friendly, with sufficient cycle parking and facilities for showering/changing	ABC, KCC, Workplaces	M
Use best practice design guidelines to attract users of all ages and abilities and ensure a good quality and consistent experience	ABC, KCC	H
Construct priority routes identified in LCWIP for the town centre and Sustrans work in rural areas	ABC, KCC, Town Council and Parish Councils	H

2. Cycle Parking

Project	Delivery Lead and Partners	Priority (H/M/L)
Delivery of cycle parking in accordance with Policy TRA6 of the Ashford Local Plan – policy TRA6 of the Local Plan requires (amongst other things) the promotion and provision of cycle parking facilities – in particular there is a requirement that new development provides appropriate levels of cycle parking	ABC, KCC	H
Ensure all staffed Council buildings have sufficient cycle parking which complies with modern standards	ABC	H
Ensure all railway stations have sufficient cycle parking which complies with modern standards	ABC, KCC, Charing PC	H



3. Maintenance of the Existing Cycling/Walking Network

Project	Delivery Lead and Partners	Priority (H/M/L)
Establish a system for management of the cycling and walking network through maintenance and inspection, and assist in the reporting of maintenance and signage issues to ensure resolution	ABC, KCC, Parish Councils	H
Ensure all new routes have required permissive access and lease agreements	ABC, KCC	H
Improve existing key routes as part of a prioritised programme identified through route assessments	ABC, KCC	H
Audit and upgrade NCN routes	ABC, KCC	H
Signing – provision of improved signage where appropriate and maintenance of existing route signage	ABC, KCC	H
Line marking/segregation – maintenance of surface markings to ensure clear segregation	ABC, KCC	H
Legible Cycling wayfinding	ABC, KCC	H

4. Safer Cycling

Project	Delivery Lead and Partners	Priority (H/M/L)
Implement enforcement practices that contribute to the safety and attractiveness of cycling and walking to make sure that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • drivers are more aware of and considerate towards cyclists and walkers and • cyclists and walkers are more aware of their rights and responsibilities to other road and path users 	ABC, KCC	M

5. Promoting Cycling and Walking

Project	Delivery Lead and Partners	Priority (H/M/L)
Ensure the Borough's commitment to cycling and walking is recognised regionally and nationally	ABC	H
Work with cycling and walking groups, forums and partnerships as a mechanism for providing information, monitoring progress and budget allocation and consulting on proposals. Eg establishment of Cycling Forum or Bicycle Users Group	ABC	H
Support the production and actions of Travel Plans, support promotional campaigns, challenges and events	ABC	H
Continue rolling out Bikeability training for children	KCC	H
Produce town cycling maps which include guidance on safer cycling to include information for drivers on safe conduct, via the website	ABC, KCC	H
Provide cycle maintenance training	ABC	M
Establish the Borough Council as an active travel employer with the provision of adequate showers, changing, bike storage and parking	ABC	H
Work with local schools to promote active modes of travel for travel to school trips	KCC	M
Encourage development and usages of related apps to promote cycling and walking on a regular basis	ABC, KCC	M

Public
Footpath

Public
Footpath



6. Tourism

Project	Delivery Lead and Partners	Priority (H/M/L)
Produce borough wide cycling maps and available online via the Council's dedicated and tourism website	ABC	H
Promote newly improved and new routes	ABC	H
Encourage e bike tourism by working with local businesses and entrepreneurs to promote rental/bike hire schemes	ABC, private businesses	H



https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/736909/walking-and-cycling-statistics-england-2017.pdf

<https://www.cyclinguk.org/statistics>

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