

LGA submission

All-Party Parliamentary Group for Cycling and Walking inquiry on Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy 2

Friday 16 July 2021



Submission

1. About the Local Government Association (LGA)

- 1.1 The Local Government Association (LGA) is the national voice of local government. We are a politically-led, cross party membership organisation, representing councils from England and Wales.
- 1.2 Our role is to support, promote and improve local government, and raise national awareness of the work of councils. Our ultimate ambition is to support councils to deliver local solutions to national problems.

2. Summary

- 2.1 Local government is ambitious to do more to accelerate a shift to cycling and walking and where possible, making it the first choice for mode of journey in every community. As each place is different, both in terms of local economic profile, demographics, geography, topography and existing infrastructure, a locally determined approach to investment will deliver the best outcomes.
- 2.2 As local elected leaders of place, councils know their places best and should be given the funding and flexibilities to work with their local communities to plan and deliver active travel programmes that meet local needs. As well as the right level of funding, councils need long-term funding certainty and the flexibility to invest in local capacity and capability, and plan strategically to deliver the right mix of schemes and future pipeline of projects.
- 2.3 To accelerate the shift to active travel, councils also need access to high quality expert advice and good practice information. This should focus on the design of schemes as well as wider support, including strategies for consultation and public engagement.
- 2.4 Consistent national messaging and national government support for local cycling and walking initiatives will be essential to achieve our collective ambitions and deliver on climate change and public health targets. Making the changes needed to drive cycling and walking will require strong local leadership, and elected members would benefit from more support for local action at the national level.

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3. Targets: Are the existing targets for cycling and walking consistent with getting transport on course to reach net zero by 2050? More specifically, do we need a new walking target for 2025, and do any other targets need to be revised or added?

3.1 Setting ambitious targets can be useful in driving outcomes. However, the Government should avoid setting restrictive local targets as the delivery of improvement rates of cycling and walking are dependent on a multitude of factors including council capacity and level of internal expertise and resource; the demography and topography of an area, and the availability of other transport modes.

3.2 Councils know their places best and should be given the freedom to work with their local communities to plan active travel infrastructure that delivers on local needs while meeting national priorities. Local government has demonstrated the ability and ambition to plan and deliver sustainable transport strategies that work for entirety of their places, and with the right resources and support this can be further accelerated.

3.3 For example, Exeter has a strong track record in delivering active walking and cycling in the city within a holistic sustainable transport policy, that has also focussed on improving bus and rail links with surrounding towns and rural areas to reduce car use in the city. [The Exeter Transport Strategy 2020-2030](#) sets the target for 50 per cent of trips within the city to be made on foot or by bike, to make it the most active city in the country. Any nationally set targets should be accompanied by the appropriate levels of resources and support to deliver them locally.

4. Overall level of funding: What level of funding is required to meet the Government's targets for increased cycling and walking by 2025 and 2030, and/or any new targets we may propose?

4.1 It is important that the government consults local authorities to understand and assess the level of funding that will be needed to meet any national targets and ambitions. Crucially, central government should provide councils with a long-term funding settlement that can be used flexibly to deliver on local needs and enable the most efficient use of funding and resources.

4.2 The Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (2017) is a requirement from the Infrastructure Act and a statutory duty for the Department for Transport to:

(1) Develop specific objective over the period of its implementation.

(2) Provide long-term financial support and allocate resources with ample guidance on how to access them over the period of implementation.

4.3 The Government should build on the approach to future growth funding signalled at the Budget in March 2021 and continue to move away from a pattern of piecemeal, fragmented and short-term interventions delivered through inefficient and expensive competitive bidding processes. Councils want to see a move towards a localist settlement that gives them the powers and resources to drive the right mix of sustainable transport infrastructure that meets communities' long-term needs.

4.4 At present, the guidance for applications for funding is often published too late and the levels of funding that is on offer for individual bids is uncertain. As a result, local authorities are unable to plan strategically to deliver on long-term priorities and are forced to spend significant resources on preparing competitive bids. Providing local government

with greater certainty over long-term funding and the powers to use it flexibly, will deliver greater return on investment now and in the future.

4.5 The Government is [spending £27 billion on strategic road investment](#), alongside significant subsidies for new electric vehicles, and a similar amount on maintaining and expanding railways. Comparatively, only £5 billion has been committed for investment in bus, walking and cycling over five years of the current Parliamentary period. Greater investment will be needed to achieve the transformative change in cycling and walking and a behavioural shift to active travel that the government has set out to achieve in every community.

4 Capacity: Do local authorities and other bodies have the capacity and skills needed to spend the funding allocations required to meet the Government's targets (or any new ones)? If not, how can this capacity be boosted, and how quickly can CWIS spending be ramped up? What should be the role of Active Travel England? What resources will it need to fulfil this role?

4.1 Like with many non-statutory services, the transport planning capacity and skills varies from council to council. Transport planning capacity has suffered disproportionately over the last ten years. Councils have on average reduced their spend on transport planning by [42 per cent](#), as their overall budgets have reduced and they have needed to prioritise essential frontline services. Existing levels of capacity depend on local circumstances and councils' priorities. In some areas circumstances have protected this capacity, but in others it will take time to rebuild.

4.2 Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) are more likely to be equipped with the capacity and resource to spend the allocations required to deliver on the Government's targets. This ability has been boosted by the guarantee of long-term funding certainty and powers to develop the need and resources to develop local transport capacity. Improving walking and cycling infrastructure has become a major element of this.

4.3 In Greater Manchester, Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) has developed a clear and growing track record of delivering improvements and an expanded network of cycling and walking infrastructure outside of London. In 2019, TfGM delivered the Trafford Park extension to Metrolink on time and on budget. With 10 years of funding certainty across the five-year Transforming Cities Fund and its successor from 2022, TfGM is planning to invest £1.5 billion investment in its 'Beelines' network over the next decade. This is expected to generate [£6 billion in wider benefits](#).

4.4 Long-term pipelines of funding have enabled TfGM to invest in the skills needed, and develop the experience required to take on larger projects to achieve the aim of delivering 50 per cent of journeys by sustainable modes by 2040.

4.5 Certainty is crucial for all institutions, including local authorities and the Secretary of State for Transport's commitment of £17 billion over 2014-2019 as part of the introduction to the first Road Investment Strategy 'allowed Highways England and its supply chain to plan their work efficiently and provided the confidence needed for them both to invest in people and equipment, growing the skills and capability necessary to deliver the scale of improvements planned to the network.'

4.6 There is a clear role for Active Travel England (ATE), together with sufficient funding for local authorities, to jump start the process and help councils to quickly develop the capacity and track record to spend more on active travel and deliver better results. In the short term, ATE

should provide Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) with clear advice, on what a strong transport planning and delivery team should look like, with templates, data sources, tools, and support, including secondments, to provide support to LTAs with the least capacity. This support will be vital for the long-term success of CWIS2 and CWIS3 spending, by ensuring that the first projects in all areas are of a high quality and impact, to secure public support for further projects.

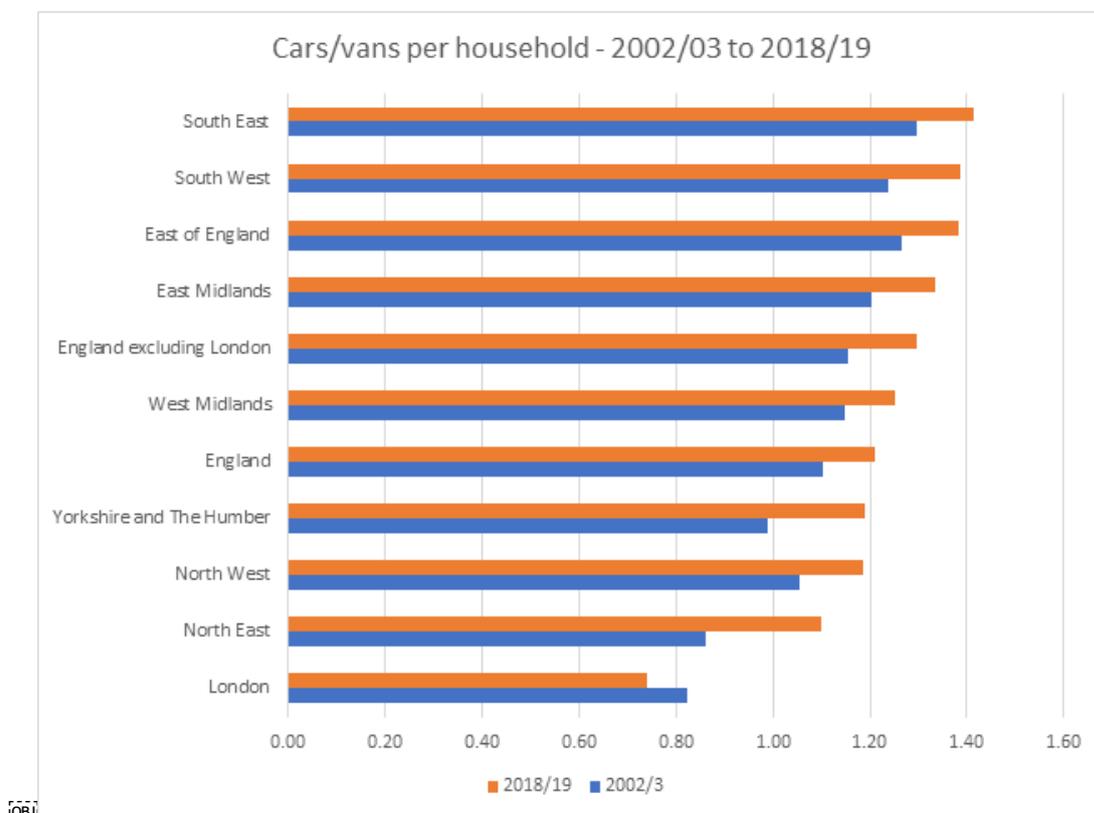
5 Breakdown of funding. What should CWIS 2 funding be spent on – i.e. what programmes or initiatives should be funded? How much capital and how much revenue? How much of this capital and revenue should go to transport/highway authorities, to Active Travel England, to the voluntary sector, to Highways England and HS2 Ltd, etc, and how much should be spent by government directly? How can government maximise the opportunities for its funding allocations to leverage in additional funding from other sources?

- 5.1 We recommend that government funding for local cycling and walking infrastructure is delivered primarily through an LCWIS, and then Local Transport Plans.
- 5.2 Councils play a critical coordinating role across the range of planning and transport policies, and investments that will affect the success of an active travel policy in a spatial area. As councils are the only bodies with the local knowledge and policy levers to co-ordinate the various streams of funding and national priorities into coherent local schemes that meet the needs of each place, the breakdown of funding delivery should reflect this. This is supported by the Williams-Shapps review into railway reform, which calls for more power to be given to councils to shape services and rail investment to integrate them into local strategies. As local leaders of place, councils are also well-placed to bring in expertise from voluntary organisations such as Sustrans and Living Streets.
- 5.3 Focusing on delivering funding through individual national initiatives or schemes undermines the benefits of creating an LCWIS and local transport plan. Local councils know their place best and should be given the powers and flexibilities to determine how funding is spent to best meet local needs while delivering on shared ambitions with national government.
- 5.4 More broadly, separate modal strategies should be integrated into a single Local Transport Plan to focus on overall outcomes – from equality to decarbonisation – and the complementarities of different modes, e.g. bus and walking. It is welcome that the National Bus Strategy sets out a desire to return the Local Transport Plan as the strategic document for funding negotiations between central and local government. Government should provide funding for the Local Transport Plan and leave it to councils to use their knowledge of the local conditions to breakdown that funding on particular projects to hit their targets.
- 5.5 Higher levels of revenue support would help councils to improve the outcomes for walking and cycling. Subsidies for hiring or renting bicycles, support for free repairs or supporting bus services are revenue spending that can have long-term returns, similar to capital investment in infrastructure, in reducing car use. Easing the sharp divide between revenue and capital spending or adjusting the share would allow areas with higher demands for revenue spending to meet that demand.
- 5.6 Councils offer the best route to maximise additional revenues into CWIS2. Developer charges on new developments can support cycling and walking infrastructure while parking or road use charging. For example, the Workplace Parking Levy in Nottingham and Congestion Charge in London have helped to fund improvements to streets for walking. In Nottingham,

[nearly one-in-four cyclists](#) who had switched from driving into the city cited the levy, or schemes funded by it, as the reason for that shift. In Brighton, the council have used parking policy to reduce congestion and car use in the city centre to increase space for walking and cycling. Any surplus generated helps to fund further improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure, which in turn, triggers demand.

6 Public and political acceptability. The extensive and widely reported opposition to schemes such as low-traffic neighbourhoods emphasises that interventions promoting walking and cycling are often controversial. How can consensus be built both nationally and locally to support the action required?

6.1 Significantly increasing the levels of walking and cycling will be politically challenging for both local and central government. There are now over 32 million cars in the UK, with [78 per cent of households having access to a car](#). There are more cars than households in every region of England outside London, the only region where ownership has fallen. Rising car ownership levels is one measure of economic growth over the past 20 years. More people than ever are enjoying the convenience and low personal cost of driving in the vast majority of England away from city centres. Public transport and active travel are not competitive options for residents in large parts of the country and driving behavioural change in these areas will be challenging. Over 35 per cent of households now have two or more cars, which increases demand for existing road space in direct competition with extra space needed for improved walking and cycling infrastructure.



Source: [National Travel Survey](#) NTS9902

6.2 [Recent research by the LGA](#) has demonstrated that individual schemes are more successful and publicly acceptable, when they are part of a wider vision that is underpinned by public engagement and democratic agreement. In many areas, the Local Transport Plan process

enables local leaders to find consensus and deliver on agreed local outcomes on decarbonisation, air quality, public health, access to jobs, schools and for people with mobility needs. Considerations about public and political acceptability are central to this process, where broad discussions about desired outcomes, trade-offs and constraints can be made fairly.

6.3 Where adequate public consultation is carried out during the Local Transport Plan process, further consultation can be limited to individual changes, for example, road closures. As the community has agreed the overall vision in the Local Transport Plan, each street, community or borough knows that every other part of their town or city is contributing, or will soon do so, to a plan that may have a short-term cost but will deliver long-term wider benefit. Avoiding atomising transport changes into individual schemes encourages public buy-in and reduces the likelihood of attracting opposition that does not take into account the wider and long-term benefits.

6.4 Nationally, it is crucial that there is recognition that Local Transport Plans and the schemes they give rise to are designed to deliver on shared priorities between local and national government. Government should be supportive of local areas who have had to make difficult decisions in order to deliver better outcomes for their communities and local environment.

7 Wider policy support. What else do DfT and other government departments need to be doing in order to maximise the impact of CWIS 2?

7.1 The impact of CWIS2 will be dependent in part on the cost and ease of motoring, and competitiveness of public transport alternatives against driving. There needs to be consideration at the national level of how transport policies for other models of travel impact on the ambition to increase walking and cycling. For example, if the costs of owning an electric vehicle is very low, people may be encouraged to use that mode both because the marginal cost is low and to justify the initial cost of buying one.

7.2 The public health benefits of replacing short journeys with car by walking and cycling, included improved physical health and air quality, should take a more prominent role in national policy-making. If councils were able to share some of the savings from better air quality and lower obesity that CWIS2 will generate for the Department for Health, this would enable them to reinvest the funds in travel and air quality initiatives to drive better outcomes for their communities.

8 Levelling up. How can CWIS 2 assist with the delivery of the levelling-up agenda? In particular, what can be done to correct the pattern that councils with a strong track record in active travel receive disproportionately large shares of the funding?

8.1 A strong track record in active travel is a reflection of an institution that has developed its capacity to invest. Levelling up the powers of councils, such as through allowing bus franchising, and providing them with larger levels of longer-term funding with flexibility, will enable councils to build their transport planning capacity and, in turn, increase their project delivery and investment. As the earlier questions on capacity acknowledges, capacity is a limit on utilising CWIS2 funding allocations. Closing the capacity gap will take time but can be shortened with effective support from ATE.

8.2 It should be recognised that the natural economic, geographic and demographic variation across the country will always place different requirements for investment in particular budget areas for different authorities.

9 Justice and inclusion. Walking and cycling are the most accessible modes of transport but the profile of those travelling by these modes does not reflect this. How can the priorities of justice and inclusion be “baked in” to CWIS 2?

9.1 Greater local flexibility within CWIS2 funding would enable councils to utilise their local knowledge of their communities to overcome the barriers that prevent residents from cycling and walking.

9.2 While capital investment in cycle and walking infrastructure is crucial to facilitate behavioural change, revenue support for safety training, awareness programmes, and subsidised bicycles of different kinds are also needed at the local level to address the barriers that stop underrepresented groups from cycling.

10 Decarbonising transport. Given the extraordinary contribution active travel can make to tackling the climate emergency, how should CWIS 2 be positioned within transport and wider climate policy? More specifically, how should CWIS 2 fit with the anticipated transport decarbonisation plan?

10.1 Gear Change was an important step in explicitly positioning walking and cycling above driving for shorter journeys. The contribution of walking and cycling to decarbonisation and meeting climate change targets is extraordinary compared to all other interventions.

10.2 The LGA has highlighted in its work on [Decarbonisation of Transport](#) the concept of 'avoid/shift/improve' to help places plan to reduce carbon emissions from transport. Walking, cycling and public transport are increasingly the centre-piece of local transport decarbonisation.

11 The relationship between central and local government. Given that most “on the ground” delivery will fall to local government whilst funding and oversight will lie at the centre, how can CWIS 2 provide successful mechanisms to support this? What can be done to support transport/highway authorities that may not have a strong record in promoting walking and cycling?

11.1 With the right resources and support, local government would be able to significantly and rapidly increase local transport planning capacity, which would allow national government to move to a system of direct oversight as has been successfully done in devolved transport bodies, such as Transport for London and Transport for Greater Manchester. Central government must also support local government in the delivery of necessary changes to road space and road use, that potentially prove disruptive or controversial, to deliver on cycling and walking ambitions.

11.2 Councils need adequate revenue funding as well as capital investment. Crucially, funding needs to be provided with long-term certainty and not via inconsistent funding awards or competitive bidding processes and local leaders need flexibilities to use funding to deliver on local needs. Some places may need new infrastructure, while in others the focus may be to target particular communities with interventions and support that enables them to take up

active travel. Funding should be provided in a way that empowers councils to determine how best to prioritise investments across different modes of transport that meet the needs of their place and community, for example, between e-scooters, cycling, walking and public transport etc.

- 11.3 Councils need to feel confident that the funding will be there to set the schedule of schemes within a wider plan. This enables resources can be concentrated on strategic and long-term outcomes for the transport network as a whole, rather than project outputs.
- 11.4 Any oversight of local areas should will be designed to help local authorities maintain focus on outcomes rather than individual schemes. Local democratic accountability should also play a key role in oversight, by ensuring councils' deliver travel schemes that work for residents, with maximized benefits and minimal disruption.
- 11.5 Councils need access to quality advice and best practice from ATE. This should not be just focused on design of schemes but on wider support, for example, strategies and processes for engaging with communities. Implementing changes to road space and active travel infrastructure requires strong local leadership and elected members would benefit from support from ATE to ensure local projects can be carried out successfully and with minimal disruption to communities.
- 11.6 Consistent national messaging and national government support for local cycling and walking projects is essential to achieve our collective ambitions and deliver on climate change and public health targets. In coming years, councils will need to make difficult decisions in terms of how they reallocate limited road space. While councils are committed to introducing more and improved cycling and walking infrastructure, they also need to make space for bus prioritisation, micromobility and e-scooters, and meet the growing demand for on-street EV charging infrastructure. As a result, difficult choices will need to be made at the local level. Government needs to recognise this and give councils the space and political backing at a national level to decide what is best for their locality.

12 Programme and project management. Complex programmes require skilled management and certainty about funding. How can CWIS 2 help to create a culture of successful planning and delivery of investment?

- 12.1 Programme and project management is a vital part of council's transport planning capacity. As many councils have needed to reduce their transport teams over the past decade, councils will need to rebuild capacity and attract skilled people to deliver complex programmes.
- 12.2 Long-term funding will be vital to provide the pipelines of projects and gives councils the confidence to invest in capacity. Another advantage of long-term funding is that it allows for more effective long-term strategic planning. Programmes and projects can be geared towards reasonable estimates of their overall benefits and costs, opposed to competitive funding pots which encourage overambitious estimates of projects to win the latest bidding round.
- 12.3 The government should signal that active travel is a shared national and local priority over the next 10 years by announcing the funding envelope for CWIS3. Professional development from ATE will support career progression and pathways to attract more people into the sector and give them the skills to manage high quality programmes and projects, building experience over time. Sharing expertise and experience from organisations such as TfL or DfT will also help to accelerate and drive best practice.