



**“The National
Cycle Network
is the largest
environmental
intervention in
the UK promoting
public health...”**

Hazel Blears *Parliamentary Undersecretary of State for Public Health*

"The National Cycle Network has made a major improvement to the availability of safe and attractive places to cycle. Research shows that cycling and other physical activities can have significant health benefits. Providing safer cycle routes addresses one of the barriers to taking up cycling, and can help contribute to a fitter and healthier nation."

John Ashton *Regional Director of Public Health, North West* "In its own way the National Cycle Network is the 21st century public health equivalent to the Victorian era's great city parks."

Professor Steven Blair *Cooper Institute, USA*

"Physical inactivity is perhaps the major public health problem of the 21st century. Environmental changes to promote walking and cycling to work and school can be an important factor in reversing the decline in energy expenditure, and thus make important contributions to public health."



Ewen Cameron *Chairman, The Countryside Agency*

"The physical and psychological benefits of taking exercise in our wonderful countryside could cut billions of pounds off the health budget every year. We at The Countryside Agency promote a Walking the Way to Health initiative, and keenly support the National Cycle Network as its cycling counterpart."

Mary Allison *Physical Activity Co-ordinator, Scottish Executive*

"A key message of Let's Make Scotland More Active (the strategy of the Physical Activity Task Force) is that people need to be more active in their daily lives. The National Cycle Network in Scotland gives people the opportunity to incorporate regular activity into their lives by walking and cycling."

Dr Sandy Macara *Chairman, National Heart Forum* "Not only is the National Cycle Network an obviously healthy way to exercise but it is also the antidote to a failing public transport system."

Professor Sir George Alberti *Ex President, Royal College of Physicians* "Physical inactivity is now a major contributor to ill-health in the UK. It is vital that people take more exercise to prevent disease and to improve their quality of life. Moderate exercise of any kind will do – and cycling is ideal. The National Cycle Network is an ideal initiative in this regard."

Dr Brian Gaffney *Chief Executive, Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland*

"The development of the National Cycle Network provides many new opportunities for people to improve their health through cycling and walking. This will contribute to and strengthen the Northern Ireland Physical Activity Strategy. The Health Promotion Agency in Northern Ireland works closely with Sustrans on its promotion."



Dr Richard Smith *Editor, British Medical Journal* "Cycling provides "utility exercise", which means you can save time while exercising. If you have to strip off and go to the gym, then you use up time. That's why I cycle to and from work through central London every day."

Robert Coleman *Director General, European Commission* "The European Commission supports the development of health impact assessment across health-related policy areas. Applying this methodology to the UK National Cycle Network will help to demonstrate how well it supports health promotion."

Jane Hutt *Minister for Health and Social Services, Welsh Assembly Government*

"The Welsh Assembly Government is keen to encourage more active lifestyles, as part of our efforts to create the conditions for better health and well being among the people of Wales. The National Cycle Network is making an important contribution to this end."

“The largest environmental intervention promoting public health in the UK”

Is our assertion true?

We are very grateful to the people who have contributed to this brochure – people who know more than Sustrans about the promotion of public health. The challenge now is to the research community (epidemiologists, health service researchers and health economists): can a major environmental intervention, whose primary purpose is social and “green” rather than health promotion, be an (or even the most) effective and efficient way to promote healthy physical activity? Please prove or disprove our assertion!

The National Cycle Network

The National Cycle Network is an ongoing partnership involving government, local authorities, major landowners, organisations and individuals, coordinated by Sustrans. It currently extends to over 6,500 miles throughout the UK, and by 2005 will reach 10,000 miles. About one-third of the Network is on traffic-free paths, with the rest using quiet lanes or traffic-calmed roads in towns or cities.

The Network offers safer environments not only for cyclists but also walkers, wheelchair users and other non-motorised travellers. It runs through population centres and connects to schools, railway stations, shopping areas and work places. In 2000 the National Cycle Network carried 60 million active travel journeys, and as both the extent and public awareness of the Network continue to grow, this figure will rise.

The National Cycle Network provides a framework and a catalyst for the development of regional and local networks; these too facilitate walking as well as cycling and help to shift the balance of advantage from the car to healthy modes of transport.

Active Travel

Active Travel is Sustrans’ programme of health projects, travel plan guidance and health impact research, working with the Department of Health, the NHS, academics and health campaigners.

Active Travel seeks to demonstrate that environmental projects, such as the National Cycle Network, are effective and efficient means of increasing population levels of regular moderate physical activity and thus improving health, as well as reducing the negative impact of motor traffic.

For further information please visit our website www.sustrans.org.uk, call the Active Travel team on 0117 926 8893 or email: activetravel@sustrans.org.uk.

Sustrans Active Travel, 35 King St, Bristol, BS1 4DZ
Active Travel, more people, more active, more often

sustrans

routes for people