

Working the Net

Introduction

Working the Net is an initiative of Sustrans, the sustainable transport charity, that links businesses to the National Cycle Network and encourages more sustainable ways of getting to work. This information sheet describes how we have linked businesses to the Network and helped companies develop sustainable transport habits and sets out guidance on route selection. Also some of the many successes of this initiative are documented to encourage your company to partner us in linking to the Network. This "off-site - issues" information sheet, read in conjunction with the "on-site - issues" Cycle Friendly Employer's Information Sheet (FF11 October 1998), provides the essential tools to get on with the job.

Short trip commuters

Sustrans has long recognised that businesses need to widen the scope of their environmental management to embrace the transport impacts of their operation. Traffic congestion is estimated to cost the UK economy £15-20 billion per year⁽¹⁾. Government transport statistics⁽²⁾ show that:

- 20% of all road traffic is people travelling to and from work
- 70% of employees travel to and from work by car
- two thirds of our daily journeys use a car for less than five miles
- half of such journeys are under two miles.

In particular, rather than accepting the use of a car as a necessity for every journey, employees need to be encouraged to give serious consideration to matching the appropriate transport mode to the journey distance, terrain and conditions.



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Commuters on Toucan crossing bringing the Bristol to Bath Railway Path, Route 4, into Bristol city centre.

Cycling and walking - the pragmatic alternative

So isn't it time we considered some alternatives? If even a proportion of our shorter journeys were made on foot or by cycle, the benefits would be huge - better fitness and health, lower pollution, less congestion and traffic danger, and people-based local communities for everyone. A key focus is to promote walking (up to two miles) and cycling to work as a viable healthy sustainable option for commuters living within a five mile radius of their place of work, both taking around 30 minutes.



London commuters on Albert Gate's segregated cycle path.

Becoming flagships in the community

The objective of Working the Net was to build a partnership with 100 businesses linked to the Network and committed to encouraging cycling and walking to work. These include the manufacturing sector, offices, retail shops and supermarkets, local authorities, universities and hospitals. These businesses would be flagships in their local communities showing the way to a healthy, more productive, workforce and lifestyle.

How can businesses get connected?

Government has recognised the health, environmental and transport benefits of cycling and has committed itself through the National Cycling Strategy to quadrupling cycling in Britain between 1996 and 2012⁽³⁾. The links with local cycle routes and the Network would enable cyclists and walkers to journey on safe routes to work. The majority of the cost may be funded from your local authority's transport budget; hence your business may only need to make a minor contribution.

Traffic congestion provides the incentive and the challenge to find safer and more enjoyable ways of getting to work.



Secure and weather protected cycle parking close to the office entrance.



© P Osborne

Through Working the Net employers and their environmental, human resource and facility management are encouraged to:

1. Promote, and where appropriate, create a dedicated, high-quality walking and cycling route connecting the Network to the workplace (separate links may be needed for individual sites and local authority support will be needed for priority crossings, traffic-calmed roads and purpose built paths).
2. Provide clearly defined, signed and marked walking and cycle routes from the site entrances to department entrances, with priority crossings of internal roads.
3. Provide good secure, covered and convenient cycle parking and storage for staff and visitors adjacent to department entrances at the workplace.
4. Provide changing and shower facilities, and lockers, (clothes drying and ironing facilities) which will be welcomed by the longer distance or energetic cyclist.
5. Introduce fiscal and other incentives to cycle rather than drive for commuter or business trips.
6. Mark this commitment with a milepost sculpture, identifying the employer at the junction with the Network.
7. Develop a Travel Plan to effectively manage the organisation's transport needs and encourage switches towards more sustainable means of transport.

An additional synergy can be developed where businesses are near to a school already linked to the Network through the Sustrans initiative, Safe Routes to School. This is an opportunity to market your approach to social responsibility, environmental management, working practices and relations with the community.

DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A TRAVEL PLAN

All the above initiatives can be combined into a full Travel Plan. The implementation of such a plan can be greatly assisted through using the Energy Efficiency resource pack⁽⁴⁾ and gaining assistance from your local authority (111 travel plan officer posts have Government sponsorship).

It's a win win situation

The Employer's benefit by having a healthier more productive workforce and gaining from a positive PR spin-off by displaying "green credentials" (more details in Sustran's Cycle Friendly Employer's Information sheet⁽⁵⁾).

The workforce benefit from:

Independence: saying goodbye to restricted parking zones, irregular public transport, the last bus home and grid-locked traffic. On a bike staff can be flexible and spontaneous, make an unplanned visit to a shop, a park, meet a friend, etc.

Lower travel costs: for staff currently spending as little as £1.20 a day on fares or petrol, changing to cycling could save over £200 a year - money which can be spent on other things! If the commute costs more the savings are even bigger!

Health and fitness: gentle regular exercise - just 20 miles a week (i.e. only two miles each way for a five day working week) can halve the risk of heart attack⁽⁶⁾. Staff will arrive at work with a clearer head ready to go without the need of a coffee pick-me-up. Longer term you could expect staff to firm up, lose weight, and improve their heart rate.



© Boots, Nottingham

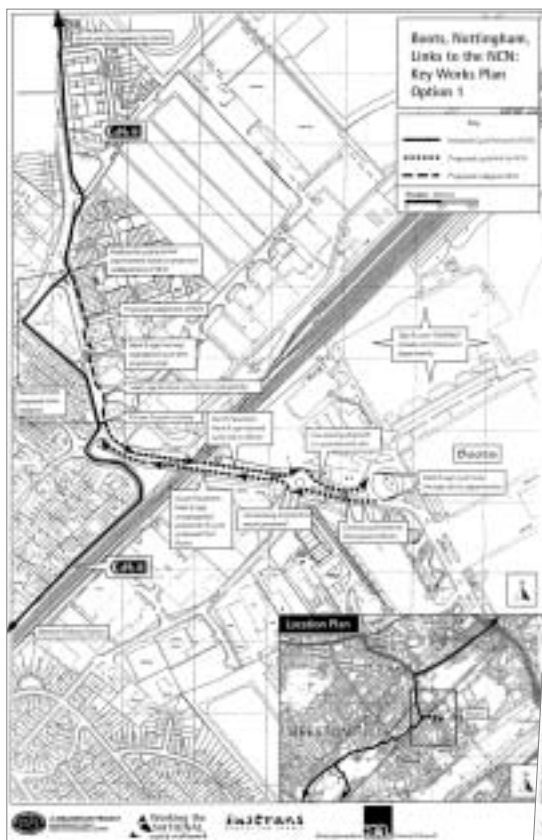
Boots: The way we were around 1950.

Fun: just try it and see how much fun it is. Staff can make it a social ride to work by "buddying up" with another cyclist on the commute.

Saving time: no waiting in queues for the bus or the car park. It is amazing how much faster than motorised traffic one can be cycling at an average of just ten miles an hour - cutting through the congestion. Staff will arrive on time and often before those in a car.

Reliability: once staff have researched and tried out their route, they will find that their journey time is predictable - bringing peace of mind rather than driving and arriving at work stressed out.

Feel good factors: employers and staff will be secure in the knowledge that they are doing their bit towards lower pollution levels, less congestion and traffic danger, and contributing to people-based local communities.

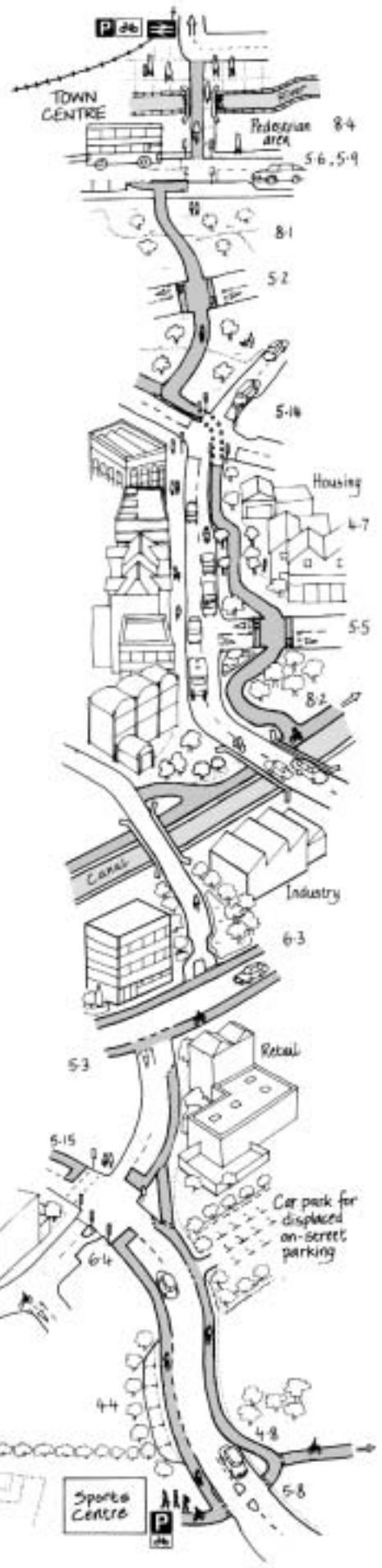


Examples of dedicated cycle route proposals.

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Many new commercial developments include high-quality cycling and walking routes. So use them!



How to select your route:

1. Route key features: The most important aspect of defining a route is that it is continuous, signed and marked. Without these key features staff can easily get lost and frustrated - there is nothing more off-putting than wondering "now where do I go?"

2. Seek LA support: Your local authority should be contacted to provide support for your business link with the Network and/or local cycle routes, signing and marking, and any necessary traffic-calming.

3. Identifying link to Network:

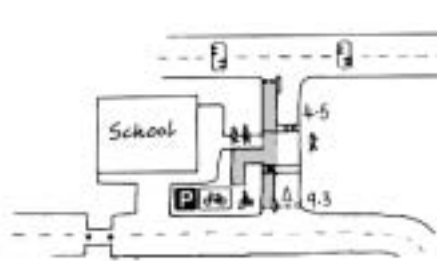
- Use detailed street maps for likely on- or off-road routes. There are many map resources including Ordnance Survey, A-Z Maps, Red Maps, the National Cycle Network route maps and guides, CycleCity Guides, and local

cycle route maps. Remember to obtain permission from the copyright holder.

- With your bicycle user group, find the shortest ride between the site and the Network. Also, identify safe routes from the Network to where groups of staff live, wherever possible avoiding heavy traffic. Finding safe and enjoyable routes are key to a fun ride to work.

- Prepare and display a map on staff notice boards showing your link to the Network, other safe routes and local cycle routes.

4. Explore and confirm: Encourage staff to try out their route at a weekend so they know how long it takes and to check out route options. As a general rule cycling three miles will take 15-20 minutes, five miles will take around 30 minutes.



Some Business Links

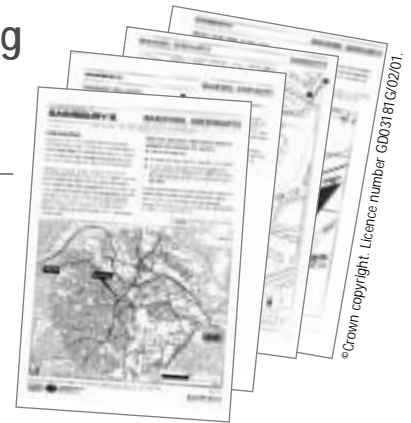
See what those linking with the Network have said:

- “National Cycle Network **Route 6** runs some 100m from our main west gate to the site, which is a great incentive to the 500 who cycle to work each day.” **Iain Macbeth**, *Site Development Manager, The Boots Company plc, Nottingham.*
- “The only group of workers enjoying their journey to work are the cyclists. We recently opened 180 new secure cycle spaces to meet the demand.” **John Elliott**, *Transport Manager, Pfizer Ltd., Sandwich, Kent. (Route 1 runs close to their site)*
- “The 50 cyclists per day who used to ride the A258 has risen to 250 since the traffic-free **Route 1** through Sandwich was opened; most of these are commuting to work.” **Phil Pittock**, *Senior Transport Planner, Kent County Council*
- “The foot/cycle bridge linking the hospital with the community and the Taff Trail has only been open for six weeks and is well-used with 120 trips during peak times alone.” **Route 8 Mark Worwood**, *Cycle User Group Coordinator, University Hospital of Wales, Cardiff.*
- “**Route 4** on our land, avoiding a dangerous commuter “rat run” along narrow roads, is being used by local people and employees walking, cycling, and running.” **Richard Chandler**, *Environmental Specialist, Solutia, Newport*
- Our link to **Route 6** provides a very successful and heavily used route between the Jubilee and University Park campuses and Queens Medical Centre”. **Christopher Strong**, *Estates Manager, University of Nottingham.*

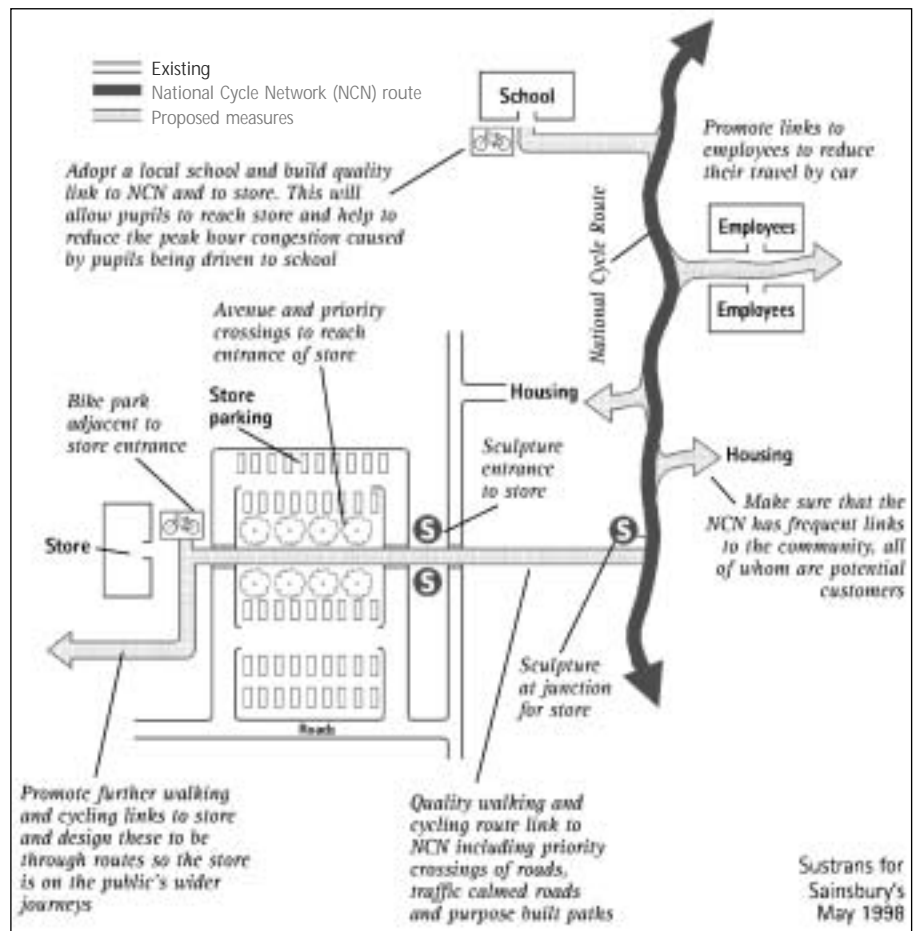
Elsewhere a number of business links from our proposals are continuing to come on stream.

Sainsbury's: Encouraging cycling and walking to their existing and new stores:

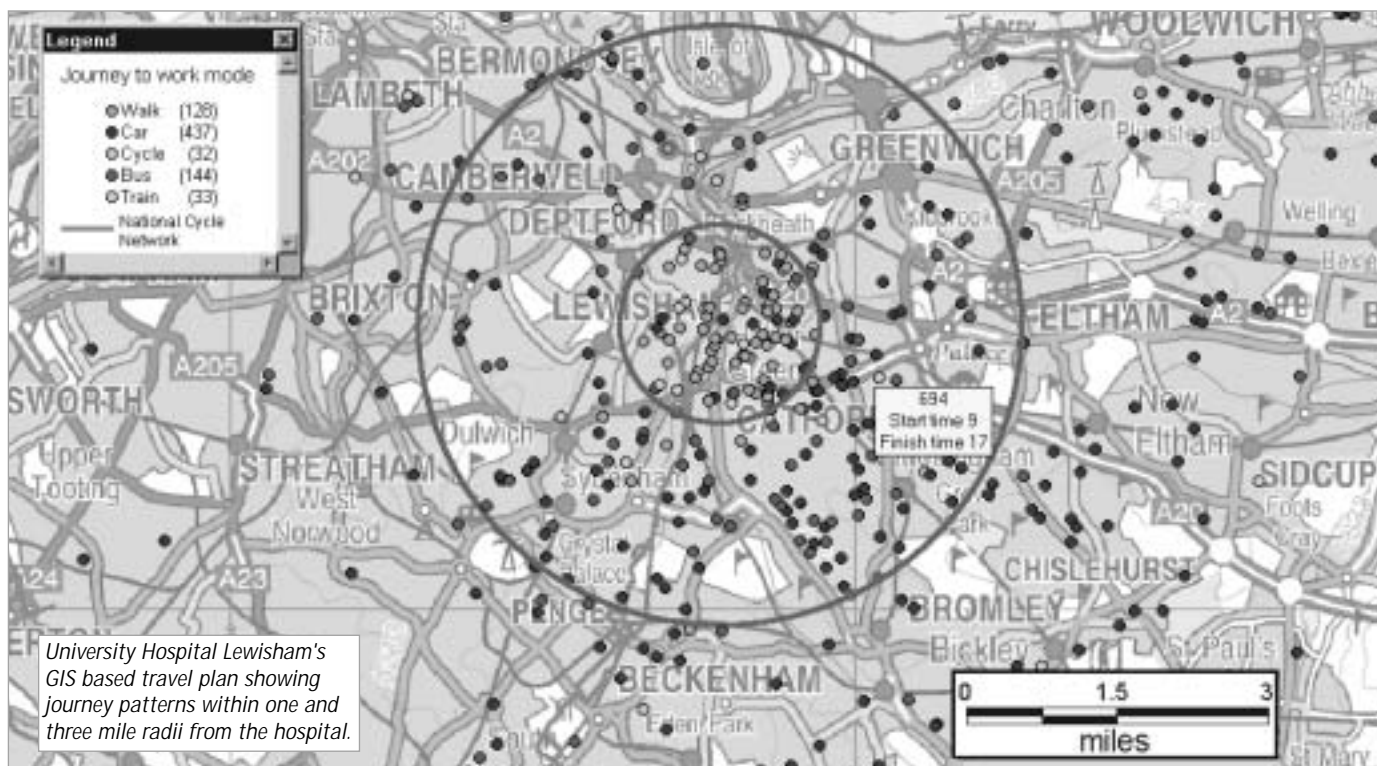
More than half of Sainsbury's 265 stores are on or near Network routes⁽⁷⁾. Sustrans has completed over 100 reports on site access improvements, facilities and wider links in the area around the stores, linking with and contributing to the development of the Network and local cycle routes. Other retailers could similarly benefit by implementing similar strategies.



Sainsbury's Bridgwater store: cycle parking adjacent to store entrance.



This diagram shows the range of measures which could be adopted around each supermarket site, all with a view to encouraging cycling (and walking) not only for the trip to the store, but for routine journeys of all kinds.



NHS Hospitals

Sustrans contacted NHS trusts and of more than 100 NHS trusts responding some 40 are within 1.5 miles. These were encouraged to link to the Network. In collaboration with University Hospital Lewisham NHS trust we successfully piloted an approach using a map based spatial database (Geographical Information System), postcode data and GIS analysis tools. This approach produces a clear picture of staff travel patterns, plotted against an Ordnance Survey background map.

The spatial analysis and interpretation is essential for a clear understanding of current travel patterns, and forms a sound basis for planning the strategies and measures to promote healthier travel choices. We are developing this approach further with hospitals, local authorities, universities and businesses.

References

1. Confederation of British Industry, Transport White Paper, 1998
2. DETR, National Road Traffic Forecasts, 1997
3. DoT, The National Cycling Strategy, 1996
4. ETSU, Energy Efficiency Best Practice Programme, A travel plan resource pack for employers, 2000
5. Sustrans, Cycle Friendly Employer's Information Sheet (FF11-1998)
6. Morris et al, British Heart Journal 1990
7. Sustrans, Sainsbury's pilot survey of cycle access/facilities, 1998.

Where do you go from here?

For further advice on how to link with the Network, Sustrans is happy to offer a free consultation, providing a map with your site shown in relation to the Network. Thereafter we are prepared to investigate and report on a commission basis. Initially send your postcode address to Gaspar Sanvicens, Working the Net Project Director, at Sustrans Head Office.



This information sheet is supported by:



BOOTS THE CHEMISTS



Pfizer staff doing their bit for 'bike to work day', Sandwich, Kent.

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INFORMATION LINE
0117 929 0888

Monday - Friday 9am -5pm
(excluding bank holidays)

or visit

www.sustrans.org.uk

35 King Street, Bristol BS1 4DZ
Tel: 0117 926 8893 Fax: 0117 929 4173

email:

workingthenet@sustrans.org.uk

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