

Sustrans School Travel

An introduction



Who We Are

Sustrans is the UK's leading sustainable transport charity which works on a range of advisory and practical projects to encourage people to walk, cycle and use public transport to benefit their health and the environment. Sustrans School Travel is one of Sustrans largest project teams, employing over 30 members of staff across the UK.

The school travel team supports school communities and local authorities wishing to develop school travel initiatives by providing information and delivering practical projects. In addition, we influence and inform governments through policy and research work and we develop partnerships to widen and strengthen our public campaign for Safe Routes to Schools.

Where we can, we work with local authorities and Sustrans colleagues to create safe routes to schools.

Our Vision

Our vision is that every child has a safe route to school. Our project was inspired by Denmark, where every child has a right to a safe route to school and where government investment over many years has made this a reality - half of Danish children cycle to school.

We aim to increase the number of children travelling in ways which benefit their health and their environment by:

- campaigning for, and sometimes creating, a safe environment for children to walk and cycle
- supporting the implementation of ambitious school travel plans – we encourage schools to adopt targets which reduce car use by at least a third
- being the centre of expertise on sustainable school travel
- putting young people at the centre of decision-making about the way they travel
- empowering and supporting communities and individuals to become champions of sustainable school travel

Our work focuses primarily on the school journey and we work principally with primary and secondary schools.

Our Approach

We recognise that Safe Routes to Schools projects are more than highway measures. They take a holistic approach and include a package of measures such as training in road safety skills for cyclists and pedestrians, initiatives such as walking buses, incentives and promotional activities, curriculum work, highway improvements and the provision of facilities such as cycle parking and waiting shelters.



Evidence shows that for school travel initiatives to be effective, they must take a whole-school approach. They involve the wider community, engage young people and encourage their participation, become part of school's ethos and are integrated with the curriculum and other school initiatives such as Healthy and Health Promoting Schools and Eco Schools. We recommend that all school travel initiatives start with the development of a school travel plan.

Our Role

We have been developing our project since Sustrans pioneered Safe Routes to Schools in 1995 when we ran a series of practical demonstration projects. The holistic approach taken at these schools demonstrated the importance of winning hearts and minds in changing travel behaviour.

We provide a free information service to disseminate best practice to those working on school travel initiatives.

Through our helpline we deal with 2,000 enquiries annually, we mail our Routes 2 Action newsletter to nearly 8,000 UK school contacts and our website, www.saferoutestoschools.org.uk, receives over 60,000 visits every quarter. Our action days have enabled over 600 individuals to set up and deliver school travel projects in their community.

We influence government policy on school journeys through our policy and research work. National transport strategies across the UK now have a strong emphasis on reducing car use and congestion on school journeys. In England, Northern Ireland and Scotland we sit on the governments' school travel expert panel / advisory groups and are funded by them to deliver practical projects. Each year we support the Welsh Assembly Government in allocation of their Transport Grant to Safe Routes to Schools projects.

We work in partnership with others working with schools in the health, transport, environmental, road safety and sustainable development agendas to ensure a co-ordinated message.

Since its launch in 2004, another Sustrans school travel initiative, Bike It, has worked with over 200 schools. In its first year, levels of cycling quadrupled in the forty pilot schools. Bike It makes cycling fun whilst reassuring parents, supporting teachers and adding value to local authority investment.

Over the past three years we have also worked in partnership with local authorities throughout England and Scotland to connect schools to local communities by creating safe walking and cycling routes, many of which form part of, or connect to, the National Cycle Network. Over 700 schools have benefited enabling more children and young people to cycle or walk to school safely.

The Future

Sustrans' school travel work attracts funding from the National Lottery, charitable trusts and UK governments as well as contributions from Sustrans supporters. Funding for our work is always a challenge but one which we address through the



ongoing monitoring and review of our programme.

Our project will develop and evolve to meet the changing educational, transport, road safety, health and environmental agendas, however our vision of a safe route for every child remains central to our work. We will be putting a greater emphasis on empowering young people through the provision of high quality information and the development of partnerships with youth-focussed organisations.

Sustrans is the UK's leading sustainable transport charity and works on practical projects to encourage people to walk, cycle and use public transport to benefit health and the environment.

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