

Improving the bottom line

Why supporting cycling to work is good for business

The way we travel has a huge impact on our prosperity and our health. By increasing the number of people who choose to commute by bike, we could not only turn the tide on the UK's inactivity epidemic, but also help our economy.

What are we proposing?

A cycle-to-work standard

Sustrans is calling on governments to recognise the economic value and health benefits of cycling to work by setting a minimum standard of facilities and support that workplaces should provide for those commuting by bike.

This would include things like:

- adequate showers and bike parking
- access to bike purchase schemes
- support in finding a safe route to work, such as maps and bike buddies.

A government-endorsed 'cycle-to-work standard' would help businesses to benchmark the level of facilities and support they should provide so more of their staff can cycle to work, helping them unlock the economic benefits of a healthy, active workforce.

Similar to the Cycle Friendly Employer Scheme in Scotland, a 'cycle-to-work standard' would give businesses access to advice on how to make their workplace fit for cycling and provide a recognised standard for their success.

Everyone should be able to cycle to work – sign our petition to make Britain's workplaces fit for cycling at www.sustrans.org.uk/cycletowork

“ Cycle parking and showers in an office should be as common as a printer and a coffee machine and by introducing a 'cycle-to-work standard' governments would be taking the first steps to making this a reality. ”

Malcolm Shepherd,
Sustrans Chief Executive



Cycling to work: a boost to our economy

Nearly 30 million adults are employed across the UK.¹ Boosting the number of people who cycle to work presents a huge opportunity to unlock the many benefits that increased levels of cycling will bring.

Currently only 3% of trips to work are by bike,² despite the fact that 44% of commuters live within five miles of work – about a 20 to 30 minute bike ride.³ In our congested streets people's journeys could be much quicker and healthier if made by bike.

And the desire is there. A survey we commissioned from YouGov revealed that 40% of non-cycling commuters would cycle to work if they could.³ That's a lot of car journeys that could be taken off our roads, easing congestion and the economic drain of traffic-jams on our businesses.

If cycling to work makes so much sense, why are so few people doing it?

Danger on our roads: the number one reason why people don't cycle to work is because they don't feel safe on the roads. 44% of people in our survey thought cycling to work was too dangerous.³ To address this we urgently need slower speed limits and more dedicated space for those on bikes, so people of all ages and all abilities feel safe to cycle.

Poor facilities: 22% of UK adults who commute to work, but not usually by bike, say they don't cycle because their workplace doesn't have the facilities they need.³ If there were better facilities at their workplace, they'd travel to work by bike.

What do workplaces need?

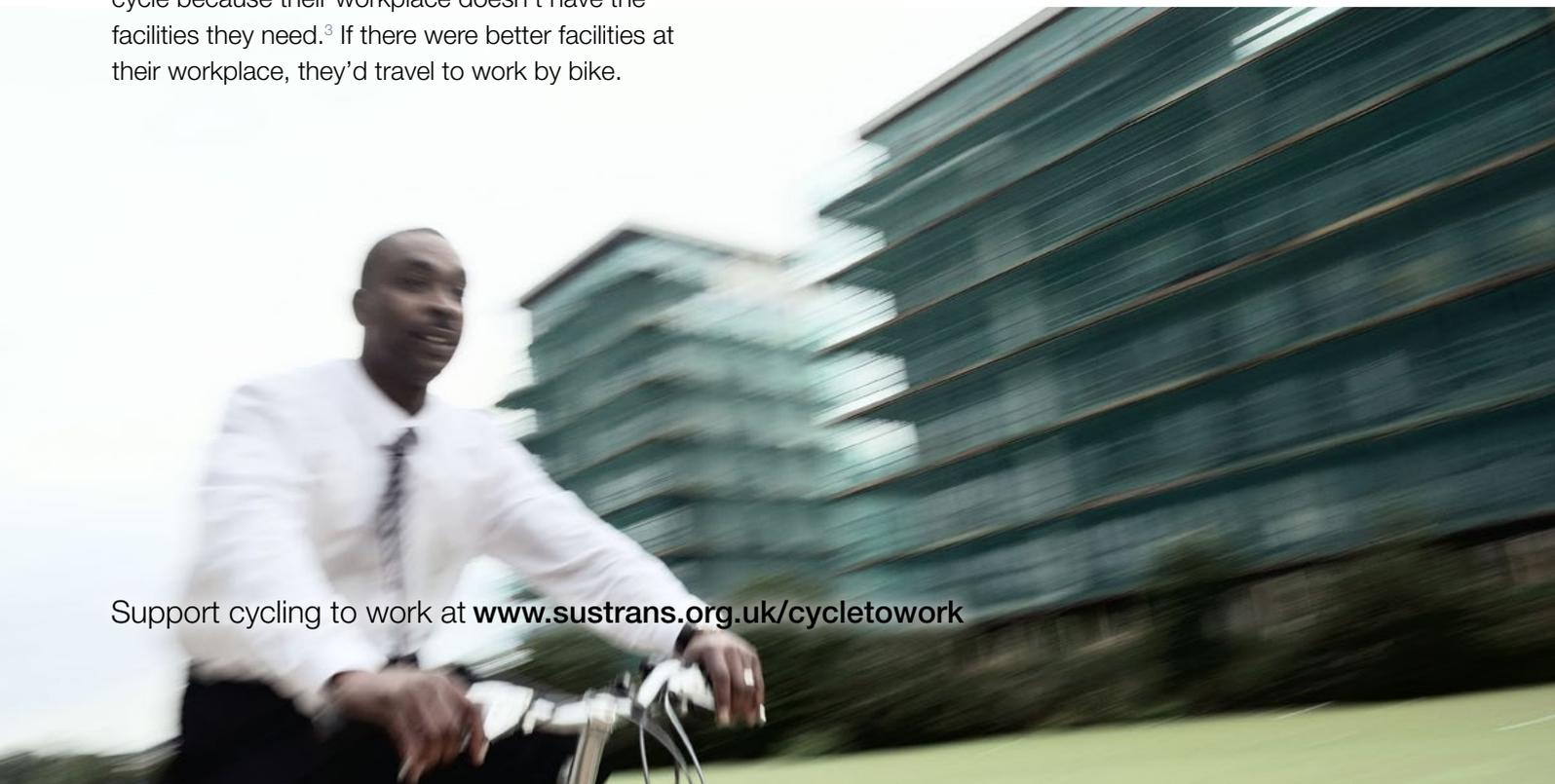
Just as workplaces offer free or subsidised car parking or season ticket loans, they should provide the facilities and support to help people cycle to work. These should include:

Facilities for cycling

- secure bike parking
- shower facilities
- lockers to store gear
- basic equipment to borrow like locks, lights and emergency waterproofs.

Support for cycling

- help with the cost of a new bike through the cycle-to-work scheme
- maps and information on safe routes to work
- bike buddying, where experienced cyclists buddy want-to-be cyclists
- bike maintenance and support rides at lunch time to get to know the area
- cycle training
- incentivised business travel by bike
- businesses providing pool bikes, including folding bikes.



What are the benefits of getting more people cycling to work?

For the employer

- 1. More productive:** employees who cycle to work are fitter, healthier and happier and as a result are less likely to take sick days.
 - absenteeism is costing UK businesses £32 billion each year⁴
 - our survey of people who cycle on the National Cycle Network found they take nearly half the sick days of the average UK worker.
- 2. More space:** fewer cars travelling into a workplace means reduced costs for car parking spaces and more room for visitors or freight vehicles.
 - Transport for London has estimated that removing one car parking space could save up to £2,000 per year in high-density urban areas.⁵
- 3. Reduced costs:** having a cycle-friendly workplace can reduce the costs associated with business travel. By providing pool bikes, or allowing employees to use their own bikes to travel to meetings, businesses can make substantial savings.
 - employers involved in the Bikes for Business scheme estimated the average savings to the organisation to be £25-80 per month per bike.⁶

For government

- 1. Healthier population:** obesity-related health problems cost the NHS millions each year and the bill is expected to keep growing. By cycling the journeys we have to make every day, like our commute to work, we can achieve a healthier, more active population.
 - using the World Health Organisation's tool, developed with Sustrans, for measuring the health benefits of walking and cycling, the estimated annual health benefit to all those using the National Cycle Network in 2012 was worth nearly £295 million.

- 2. Less congested:** rush hour congestion can have an impact on the economy by preventing the movement of goods and services.
 - congestion on England's roads cost the economy over £10 billion a year in urban areas alone in 2009 and could rise to £22 billion by 2025.⁷
- 3. Better use of our roads:** the more people cycle and the less they use cars, the more space we create on our roads. Making better use of our extensive existing road network means we don't need to invest as heavily in expensive new roads and can instead fund more local public transport services.
- 4. Less pollution:** total cost of CO₂ for car trips made in the UK each year is £3.98 billion.⁸

For individuals

- 1. Cheaper:** in these hard economic times people need more affordable alternatives to the car to travel to work, and cycling is a low-cost alternative.
 - the average cost of running a car each year is £1,758, representing a significant portion of the average UK income and even more for low income earners
 - one in five cyclists say that saving money was the reason they choose to cycle.
- 2. Healthier:** cycling to work builds recommended physical activity levels into our daily lives, helping us avoid heart disease, certain types of cancer, type 2 diabetes and obesity. It's also good for our mental wellbeing.
 - the average cycle commute to work burns 235 calories.⁹
- 3. Time-saving:** 8.7 million people in the UK have gym memberships, but we all know how many of us don't use them.
 - the average gym membership is £442 per year, costing Britons between £37 million and £200 million annually¹⁰
 - by cycling to work we get the daily exercise we need, without having to spend any extra time or money to get it.

References

- 1 ONS, 2013 Labour Market Statistics April 2013
- 2 ONS, 2011 Census Analysis - Method of Travel to Work in England and Wales Report
- 3 YouGov, 2013 Commute and Exercise Survey commissioned by Sustrans. YouGov Plc interviewed a total sample size of 2,205 adults, of which 1,261 commuted to work but not usually by bike. Fieldwork was undertaken between 29th April - 1st May 2013. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+)
- 4 PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2011 www.ukmediacentre.pwc.com/News-Releases/Absenteeism-costing-UK-business-32-billion-a-year-with-workers-taking-almost-double-the-number-of-sick-days-as-US-counterparts-says-PwC-1076.aspx
- 5 pteg/Sustrans, 2011 Cycling in the city regions: Delivering a step change
- 6 TfL, undated Pool bike for business www.tfl.gov.uk/assets/downloads/Pool-bikes-for-business.pdf
- 7 DfT, 2006 The Eddington Transport Study: The case for action – Sir Rod Eddington's advice to Government
- 8 Calculated using standard methodology adapted from DfT's appraisal guidance (WebTAG3.14.1), using data from the National Travel Survey supplied by ONS
- 9 The average commute is 2.9miles (NTS average provided for WSUE process). Calorie estimate assume 12mph for 70kg person, burning 563 calories per hour
- 10 www.which.co.uk/news/2011/01/brits-waste-37m-on-unused-gym-memberships--242448

Sustrans makes smarter travel choices possible, desirable and inevitable. We're a leading UK charity enabling people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of the journeys we make every day. We work with families, communities, policy-makers and partner organisations so that people are able to choose healthier, cleaner and cheaper journeys, with better places and spaces to move through and live in.

It's time we all began making smarter travel choices.