

Life after lockdown: Briefing Paper 3

A green and just recovery: healthier places and better transport



Photo: Jonathan Bewley

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This paper is part of a series of briefing papers exploring ideas and solutions in response to Covid-19 that help us build back better, creating healthier places and happier people.

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Summary

The Covid-19 pandemic is a wake-up call. The way we currently live is neither sustainable nor fair.

The climate crisis and destruction of the natural world is entwined with the rise in global pandemics. Our economy is not working for many people, and more people are spending more time living in poor health.¹

Covid-19 and many other crises are now inevitable, they're not going away. The choice facing the UK is not whether we change, but when.

Healthier places and better transport will underpin the UK's recovery.

How people access their everyday needs, and move around our cities, towns and neighbourhoods will play a vital role in helping the nation's future economic recovery and progress towards a greener and fairer society.

We are currently facing: inequity, the climate crisis, air pollution, physical inactivity, community severance, road collisions, congestion, high street crisis and economic stagnation.

Bold ideas for healthier places and better transport

Record investment exists in transport, and targets to build new homes are higher than ever before. A radical transformation in transport and planning policy is required to:

- Prioritise the most vulnerable, and reduce societal and health inequities
- Become net zero, improve air quality and the natural environment
- Improve economic resilience and wellbeing for all people

Solution 1: A plan for healthier places and living locally, designed around 20-minute neighbourhoods

The global Covid-19 pandemic has generated new habits to live more locally. Living in proximity to everyday needs and services can help increase access and reduce inequalities whilst reducing the need to travel longer distances.

We need to:

- Adopt a 20-minute neighbourhood planning principle to ensure everyone has a choice to live within walking distance of everyday needs and amenities
- Invest in and incentivise 20-minute neighbourhood planning for new developments and urban regeneration

- Introduce a levy on online shopping, and invest in local high streets to create welcoming and safe neighbourhood centres with more space for people

Solution 2: A green and just revolution in transport demand and investment

Planned investment in transport in the UK does not align with our targets for decarbonisation, reducing inequity, and likely changes to travel demand following Covid-19.

Transport is the biggest emitter of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the UK. Electric vehicles have a role, but modelling suggests private vehicle use will need to be reduced by up to 60% by 2030 to meet climate change targets.²

We need to:

- Introduce annual targets to reduce travel demand from private motor vehicles
- Review existing funding commitments for transport infrastructure that will increase GHG emissions
- Increase funding for walking and cycling with a minimum of £8bn over the next five years and ensure funding prioritises reducing inequity
- Improve public transport operating models and increase investment in public transport
- Electrify motor transport so that all new cars are electric by 2030 and provide financial support for poorer households who are dependent on road travel

Solution 3: Ensure fiscal incentives favour public transport, walking and cycling

Green stimulus measures alone are unlikely to be enough. Journeys by sustainable modes need to be more attractive to people and businesses than driving to change behaviours. Driving in the UK is currently subsidised. The costs to people's health and the environment are borne elsewhere and by others who do not drive, or drive far less.

We need to:

- Introduce road pricing and increase fuel duty, fairly
- Introduce a frequent flyer levy and use this to make travel by trains, buses and ferries cheaper, greener and more attractive
- Make public transport affordable or free

Solution 4: A 'Green New Deal' for jobs and skills

Economic forecasts suggest the UK economy will shrink between 8% and 14% this year.³ Redundancies are being announced on a daily basis and youth unemployment could rise to two million.⁴

The opportunities to create low-carbon jobs and industries across all sectors have never been greater. Cycling and walking infrastructure is one of the best investments the UK government could make, with the potential to create 103,000 jobs in the next two years.⁵

We need to:

- Develop a green jobs programme that creates thousands of new low-carbon jobs
- Protect and reskill existing workers across the transport sector, whilst creating new jobs for low-carbon roles
- Increase workforce diversity across the sector

Introduction

Covid-19 has been described by the United Nations as the biggest global challenge since World War Two.⁶ The next six months is likely to be the best opportunity since then to reshape society and build back better.

The 2008 global financial crisis sent the UK spiralling into recession. We responded with bailouts and government stimulus packages, followed by austerity measures that significantly reduced public spending. The consequences saw increased inequity across the UK⁷ and a missed opportunity to decarbonise and green our industry.⁸

Twelve years on and we find ourselves in the midst of an even greater health, environmental and economic emergency. The Covid-19 pandemic has so far led to over 43,000 deaths in the UK⁹ whilst efforts to control it have shut down large parts of our economy. The UK economy shrank by a record 20.4% during April.¹⁰ Whilst employment has been partially protected so far by the government's furlough scheme, unemployment is expected to increase as the scheme winds down.¹¹

As we begin to emerge cautiously from lockdown, we can expect a recovery plan from the UK Government. The beginnings of this was set out by Prime Minister Boris Johnson in his speech 'A New Deal for Britain'. Chancellor Rishi Sunak is also planning to announce emergency infrastructure investments later this week to minimise the impacts of the recession. What has been outlined thus far is neither ambitious, nor green, and is unlikely to help level-up by addressing health and economic inequity.¹²

The next six months is an opportunity to build back better.

It is an opportunity to change the course of the climate emergency and stop a post-lockdown rebound in greenhouse gas emissions that would overwhelm efforts to avert a climate catastrophe.¹³

It is an opportunity to transition to a fairer and more just economy that works for all people reducing structural inequity, and creating healthier places and happier people.

A low carbon future must be one in which all of society benefit. Equally an economic boom or a reduction in inequity without tackling the environmental crisis will be a failure.

We need to do both.

Healthier places and better transport will underpin the UK's recovery and a greener and fairer economy.

The climate crisis, Covid-19 and many other crises facing humanity are now inevitable, they're not going away. The choice facing the UK is not whether we change, but when. We can choose to begin now, rather than having that change thrust upon us, or we can choose so late in the day that those who already experience inequity are further pushed into it. We need to put bold ideas into action that we think will get us to where we need to be in the greenest and fairest way.

How people access their everyday needs, and how people move around our cities, towns and neighbourhoods will play a vital role in helping the UK to get through the current crisis and in the nation's future economic recovery and progress towards a greener and fairer society.

But our current transport system is not fit for purpose. We have designed the UK around motor vehicles and now are facing the consequences – inequity, climate crisis, air pollution, physical inactivity, community severance, road collisions, congestion and economic stagnation. At the same time local businesses, high streets, neighbourhoods and whole regions are struggling. We are building dormitory settlements containing little else except houses and highways.

A return to business as usual would be a huge mistake.

Instead we can take this opportunity to reconsider transport and spatial planning that is fit for the future and better aligned with people's needs. We can design a transport and places that enable people to access the things they need, whilst reducing the need to travel too far, and where the act of travelling doesn't cause environmental, health and social harm.

Now is the time to be bold and radical in our thinking and policy.

This paper proposes four big ideas that we think need addressing if we are to recover from Covid-19 whilst creating healthier places and transport:

1. A plan for healthier places and living locally, designed around 20-minute neighbourhoods
2. A green and just revolution in transport demand and investment
3. Ensure fiscal incentives favour public transport, walking and cycling
4. A 'Green New Deal' for jobs and skills



Photo: Crispin Hughes

The UK is facing connected health, environmental and economic crises

The climate crisis

“Limiting global warming to 1.5C, compared with 2C, could reduce the number of people both exposed to climate-related risks and susceptible to poverty by up to several hundred million by 2050”

IPPC, 2018¹⁴

The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPPC) report in 2018 indicates globally we need to halve greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) by 2030, and reach net zero by 2050 if we are to limit global warming to 1.5C.¹⁵ The UK, under the Climate Change Act, is legally obliged to meet carbon budgets every five years, currently set until 2032 and ultimately designed to ensure the UK carbon account for the year 2050 is net zero.¹⁶

Transport is now the biggest emitter of GHG emissions in the UK. Domestic transport (road, rail, domestic aviation and shipping) equates to 28% of all UK emissions.¹⁷

Whilst other sectors have reduced their emissions dramatically since 1990, for example energy production by 62%, the domestic transport sector has only seen a drop of 3%.¹⁸ Road transport is the most significant source of emissions in this sector and in 2017 made up around a fifth of the UK's total GHG emissions, having risen by 6% since 1990.¹⁹

Before the Covid-19 pandemic motor vehicle use in Great Britain was increasing²⁰. UK transport policy has failed to significantly reduce transport greenhouse gas emissions since 1990.

Whilst electric vehicles have a role to play, modelling suggests we also need to reduce private vehicle use between 20 and 60% by 2030 if we are to meet governmental climate change targets.²¹ This will require a radical and rapid change in UK transport policy to reduce car use.



Photo: Jonathan Bewley

The health crisis

“Poverty has a grip on our nation’s health – it limits the options families have available to live a healthy life. Government health policies that focus on individual behaviours are not effective. Something has gone badly wrong.”

Michael Marmot, 2020²²

In 2010 a landmark report was published, Fair Society, Healthy Lives, also known as The Marmot Review.²³ The report revealed widespread health inequities exist and that they were linked to social inequity. The most disadvantaged in society were dying earlier and living less of their lives healthily than those better off.

Ten years since this original publication in early 2020 as the Covid-19 pandemic was spreading across the UK, a second review was completed.

It revealed, for the first time in more than 100 years, life expectancy has failed to increase across the country, and for the poorest 10% of women it has actually declined. Over the last decade, health inequalities have widened overall, child poverty has increased. Overall the amount of time people spend in poor health has increased since 2010.²⁴

The Covid-19 pandemic is a health crisis in itself but it has also exposed inequities across health. Older people, people with long-term health conditions, people from ethnic minorities and people from deprived backgrounds are all at greater risk from Covid-19.²⁵ Deaths are not spread equally across society and the risk from a second spike are much higher in areas with more people in these demographic groups.

BritainThinks have collected diaries from lockdown of 50 Britons. They reveal a significant contrast between people who can afford to cope and those struggling to feed their families and maintain their physical and mental health.²⁶ Prior to the pandemic, YouGov polling showed 50% of Britons said they were happy. This is down to 26% while stress has surged.²⁷

Where people live, their options to get around and the impact of excessive motor vehicles has a significant part to play in widening health inequities and declining health across the UK.

Transport policy in the UK has largely been designed around increasing capacity for cars. This has helped create an obesogenic environment by increasing physical inactivity associated with sedentary lifestyles and obesity.

19% of people living in the UK do not have access to a car and this increases significantly with reductions in household income²⁸. Not having access to a car limits transport choice and can stop people from accessing everyday needs, education and employment. This increases the risk of transport poverty²⁹ and poor health, including the risk of social isolation.

The car also has an indirect role on the health of individuals by shaping a local environment, a local economy, and local social structures that make walking and cycling less desirable.

People living in more deprived areas are typically exposed to greater levels of motor vehicles on the streets in their neighbourhoods. This increases the risk of serious injury or death from a collision with a motor vehicle. It also means that people suffer from greater levels of air pollution. Cars cause neighbourhood severance, and this environment paradoxically drives people ever further into using their cars if they have access to one, to travel and get away, compounding health problems further.



Photo: Jonathan Bewley

The economic crisis

“The spread of Covid-19 and the measures to contain it are having a significant impact on the UK. Activity has fallen sharply since the beginning of the year and unemployment has risen markedly, both domestically and globally.”

Bank of England, 2020³⁰

Economic forecasts suggest the UK economy will shrink between 8% and 14% this year.³¹ So far, whilst thousands of people have sadly lost their jobs, millions more are currently on furlough, protected by the Government.

However the Government’s furlough scheme will wind down from September and will close at the end of October.³² Businesses are already announcing redundancies on a daily basis and far more are expected to come, as the government gradually reduces the support available through the scheme. This is likely to affect the hospitality and retail sectors most, especially communities that heavily depend on tourism and visitors.

The Institute of Fiscal Studies suggests the lockdown is affecting young workers the hardest. Employees aged under 25 were about two and a half times as likely to work in a sector that is now shut down as other employees. The Youth Unemployment Group predicts youth unemployment could potentially rise to two million young people.³³

Covid-19 has exposed inequities in the workplace and employment. Low-paid people are more likely to have to go to work, more likely to be furloughed, and less likely to receive a good level of sick pay.³⁴ The mortality rate is also significantly higher in the most deprived areas of the country, and amongst people from BAME groups.³⁵

Socio-economic inequities have been and will be further exacerbated by the pandemic. These problems already existed, but have been exposed through the impacts of Covid-19. They will also become more entrenched without action not just affecting individuals suffering from socio-economic inequity but also the UK economy as a whole.

The economic crisis also has huge repercussions for individual health and wellbeing. For example, the Mental Health Foundation found that 34% of UK adults surveyed and in full-time work were concerned about losing their jobs; 20% of unemployed people surveyed said they had suicidal thoughts and feelings within the last two weeks.³⁶



Photo: Jonathan Bewley

An opportunity to build back better

The Covid-19 pandemic is a wake-up call.

It has sharply exposed the way we currently live is neither sustainable nor fair.

The climate crisis and destruction of the natural world is entwined with the rise in global pandemics. The resultant impact on people's lives, wellbeing and health is deeply unequal and is directly related to structural inequity across society. Our economy is not working for many people, jobs are insecure and more people are spending more time living in poor health.

In times of crisis there are also opportunities. It is often a time when more radical policy and ideas gain traction.

Roosevelt's New Deal responding to the Great Depression in the 1930s was a series of programs, public work projects, financial reforms, and regulations that were radical for its time and generated jobs and hope amongst Americans. The NHS was created in 1948 following the Second World War. It was ambitious social reform designed on the principles of a health service that was comprehensive, universal and free at the point of delivery.

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to a wave of green and social recovery plans across the world and there is more opportunity than ever to ensure new jobs and national economies are better built around low-carbon activity.

In the UK, we have six months to begin a transition to a greener economy and a fairer and healthier society. Our transport system and how we plan and improve local neighbourhoods, towns and cities will underpin this green and just transition to build back better.



Photo: Transport for Greater Manchester

Solutions for a green and just recovery

Record investment exists in transport, and targets to build new homes are higher than ever before.

A radical transformation in policy, investment and delivery, however, is required if we are to align transport, urban renewal and planning, with decarbonisation of our economy and increasing social equity.

Transport and spatial planning connect people, communities and services that cannot be delivered digitally, however benefits are unequally distributed across society.

A transition towards green and just transport and planning policy must seek to:

- Become net zero, improve air quality and the natural environment
- Prioritise the most vulnerable and reduce societal and health inequities
- Improve economic resilience and wellbeing for all people

These aims underpin the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, and align closely with The Climate Coalition's Green Recovery Plan, of which Sustrans is a member.

Many people are also employed in transport and the sector has a role to play in reducing unemployment, reskilling and creating new green jobs, especially for young adults as a result of Covid-19.

We have four big solutions for a green and just transition for transport across the UK:

1 A plan for healthier places and living locally, designed around 20-minute neighbourhoods

The global Covid-19 pandemic has generated new habits to live more locally as a result of government advice during lockdown, and a reduction in public transport capacity. For example, a recent survey suggested 59% of consumers in Britain have used more local stores and services to help support them during lockdown.³⁷

We need to:

- Adopt a 20-minute neighbourhood planning principle to ensure everyone has a choice to live within walking distance of everyday needs and amenities
- Invest in and incentivise 20-minute neighbourhood planning for new developments and urban regeneration
- Introduce a levy on online shopping, and invest in local high streets to create welcoming and safe neighbourhood centres with more space for people

Adopt a 20-minute neighbourhood planning principle to ensure everyone has a choice to live within walking distance of everyday needs and amenities

65% of UK adults agree that people should be able to meet most of their everyday needs within a 20 minute walk from their home

Sustrans-commissioned YouGov Survey, 2019

People want to live locally and the government should support this.

Living in proximity to everyday needs and services can help increase access and reduce inequalities whilst reducing the need to travel longer distances. Over 80% of trips over five miles are taken by car whereas over 80% of trips less than a mile are walked.³⁸ Longer trips create the majority of GHG emissions from transport and living further away from key services increases the risk of inequity but making people's needs harder to access.

Cities like Melbourne, Paris and Copenhagen are beginning to design neighbourhoods around a 20 or 15 minute planning principle which aims to ensure everyday needs and destinations are within a 20 minute return walk from where people live. Designing neighbourhoods for people rather than vehicles is proving to be politically popular with people recognising the benefits, as we can see from Anne Hidalgo's recent re-election as Mayor of Paris, vowing to remove cars and boost cycling and walking.

We recommend that planning across the UK, both locally and nationally, adopts the principle of a 20-minute neighbourhood. Forthcoming planning reforms should facilitate the delivery of these neighbourhoods

which should ensure that everyday needs and services are located within a 20-minute return walk from where homes are built. As part of this, transport infrastructure design within neighbourhoods – and to connect neighbourhoods – should make walking, cycling and public transport more attractive to people than driving. Integration between planning and transport planning is key.

If you live in a more deprived neighbourhood within the UK, you are less likely to have access to basic services and amenities nearby. You are also less likely to have good public transport links and there is more likelihood that you will be exposed to higher levels of motor vehicles increasing air pollution, risk of a collision and community severance.

The choice to live in a well-designed 20-minute neighbourhood should be the choice for everyone not just those that can presently afford to do so. Access to affordable and social housing and housing that suits different generations and needs should be present within a 20-minute neighbourhood.

Invest in and incentivise 20-minute neighbourhood planning for new developments and urban regeneration

To enable local living, we need to ensure everyday needs and services are close to where people live, and that transport is planned to ensure most local journeys are walked cycled or use public transport.

For this to work in practice it is essential that we build new homes as part of mixed-use development within or adjacent to existing cities and towns.

The UK Government and devolved equivalents need to review the economic incentives that currently push many developments away from brownfield land and/or generate car dependency.

80% of UK adults agree that people should have the opportunity to shape the places in which they live and spend time

Sustrans-commissioned YouGov Survey, 2019

Planning that focuses on 20-minute living will require financial support to unlock more brownfield sites that are most suitable for residential and mixed use development. This investment should favour developments that:

- include a greater variety of housing stock and genuinely affordable housing stock
- are built at densities to support local services, businesses and public transport, and
- reduce car dependency and unlock funding mechanisms for walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure

The confirmation in the Prime Minister's New Deal speech, on 30 June 2020, of a £12bn affordable homes programme that will support up to 180,000 new affordable homes for ownership and rent over the next eight years is welcomed although it is important to align this with the principles of 20-minute living.

Working with local planning authorities, developers and other stakeholders is critical to set a clear, long-term policy and economic framework for better development that underpins planning systems built around the principle of 20-minute living for everyone.

Fiscal measures should also be used to dis-incentivise new housing developments built in the wrong place that will not deliver these policy objectives. Local authorities should be given powers and support to prevent new development that is likely to lock-in car dependency, GHG emissions and where long-term public transport provision is not viable. This is especially the case when a new development requires additional capacity on the existing roads network.

National programmes should also be reviewed including the Garden Town programme. Research shows that in reality most Garden Towns are designed away from existing rail and bus links, are too far to walk and cycle, and do not have key services and destinations built within them to encourage local trips.³⁹ They are also often built alongside significant investment in road capacity to 'deal with' the additional car journeys created. This should be viewed as an out-dated approach and if Garden Towns are to work in the future they must do so without locking-in car dependency.

Introduce a levy on online shopping, and invest in local high streets to create welcoming and safe neighbourhood centres with more space for people

79% of adults in the UK feel living nearby shops, cafes and restaurants and cultural attractions is important when choosing a place to live

Sustrans-commissioned YouGov Survey, 2019

During lockdown we have seen a huge increase in the number of people working from home and living locally. At the same time, however new habits for online deliveries have formed during lockdown which are pushing people away from shopping on the high street.

Goods are almost always cheaper online as a result of cheaper costs and reduced taxes. There are suggestions that the Government is exploring the idea of introducing a levy similar to that for plastic bags⁴⁰ placed on deliveries. We suggest this should only be for deliveries by motor vehicle which would incentivise greener transport and e-cargo cycle delivery. Money raised through a levy could be reinvested in supporting our local high streets.

It seems living locally is likely to continue as lockdown eases.⁴¹ Without the daily commute to a larger town or city, more people will be spending more time in their immediate local area. People living more locally could provide opportunities for local high streets and local-economies.⁴²

Steps should be taken to capitalise on this trend in the future through investment. Having a larger number of local high street centres makes accessing local everyday services easier for more people. It also helps to facilitate more local journeys, allowing people to leave the car at home and encouraging walking or cycling.

We must continue to reinvent local high streets and city centres by creating more space for people, and making temporary changes permanent in response to Covid-19.

74% of adults in the UK think it is important that action is taken to create more public 'living' space by transforming streets into pedestrianised parks and spaces

Sustrans-commissioned YouGov Survey, 2019

Local high streets and town centres must also respond to changing patterns in work, shopping, socialising, learning, culture and exercise. Community work hubs, click and collect hubs as well as more housing including intergenerational living are innovations which will be a feature of this and our planning system should respond.



Photo: Jonathan Bewley

2 A green and just revolution in transport demand and investment

Planned investment in transport in the UK does not align with our targets for decarbonisation, reducing inequity, and likely changes to travel demand following Covid-19.

We need to:

- Introduce annual targets to reduce travel demand from private motor vehicles
- Review existing funding commitments for transport infrastructure that will increase GHG emissions

Increase funding for walking and cycling with a minimum of £8bn over the next five years and ensure funding prioritises reducing inequity

Improve public transport operating models and increase investment in public transport

Electrify motor transport so that all new cars are electric by 2030 and provide financial support for poorer households who are dependent on road travel

Introduce targets to reduce travel demand from private motor vehicles

78% of adults in the UK feel that it is important that action is taken to become 'carbon neutral' by 2030

Sustrans-commissioned YouGov Survey, 2019⁴³

Whilst electric vehicles have an important role to play, modelling suggests we also need to reduce private vehicle use between 20% and 60% by 2030, if transport is to play its role in meeting the UK's carbon budgets under the Climate Change Act.⁴⁴

Air pollution, dangerous roads, physical inactivity, community severance and congestion are all high priority issues facing cities and towns. The climate crisis has added another urgency on top of existing issues to reduce private motor vehicles in the UK.

More cities than ever before are either developing proposals or already taking action to reduce car use. City leaders are becoming much more ambitious in their strategies to reduce car use and this has the potential to make their cities better for people, businesses and visitors.

However, to tackle the climate crisis we need to also focus on longer journeys which make up the bulk of emissions from motor vehicles. We believe we need all nations in the UK to urgently work

towards annual reduction targets to reduce motor vehicle usage in line with government carbon budgets. These targets should be reported against publically for both local and strategic roads. These reduction targets should be incorporated into considerations for roads investment plans in all nations, including the Roads Investment Strategy in England.

Following Covid-19, transport demand, including car usage, is likely to be significantly reduced. More people will work from home and many longer distance work trips are likely to take place digitally as opposed to in person. This provides a significant opportunity to continue this positive and important behavioural trend, whilst investing in public transport, walking and cycling to provide better alternatives for people.

Review existing funding commitments for transport infrastructure that will increase greenhouse gas emissions

Investment in transport in the UK is at record levels, primarily as a result of confirmed funding for large infrastructure projects. They include:

- The second Roads Investment Strategy (RIS2)
- Heathrow expansion

RIS2 will see £27.4 billion invested in England's Strategic Road Network for upgrades and maintenance; while a third runway at Heathrow will raise capacity to 130 million passengers a year and cost up to £18.6 billion.⁴⁵

These projects are designed to increase capacity for longer-distance travel, either between cities and towns within the UK or abroad. We need to urgently review these projects to understand if demand still exists following Covid-19 and the implications for GHG emissions from these projects.

There are significant arguments against these projects as to how they align with our targets to reduce GHG emissions as part of the Climate Change Act and the UK's carbon budgets, as well as their impact on reducing inequity.

Prior to the pandemic, the UK's transport networks were considered the primary enabler for connecting the economy and people. Lockdown has demonstrated that connectivity can also be provided in an effective way by broadband networks and associated technologies.

Research with businesses and public surveys suggest a future picture of working and engaging in social activities more remotely and a reduced appetite for travelling, especially long-distances.

The Automobile Association's president, Edmund King recently told BBC News he expected that traffic levels would fall overall. The chancellor currently plans to spend over £27bn on strategic roads, but if demand is no longer there, it is not needed.⁴⁶

This offers an opportunity to instead divert existing transport investment in the UK to meet the needs of people and businesses, whilst levelling up the economy and meeting our climate targets.

We need to:

- Reduce the level of investment in the Roads Investment Strategy 2 and divert this to public transport, walking and cycling. The remaining funding for RIS2 should focus on improving the existing network, as opposed to increasing capacity.
- Cancel Heathrow expansion and instead divert this to sustainable modes focusing on levelling up geographical regions across the UK.

Invest a minimum of £8bn in walking, cycling and low-traffic neighbourhoods over the next 5 years

Funding for walking and cycling is far below required levels if we are to make walking and cycling a normal choice for people and reduce car use.

The recent announcement of £2bn in England is welcomed but the second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy needs provide sustained increased funding. Over the next five years, a minimum of £8bn is required to make walking and cycling the normal choice for people for short journeys or as part of longer journeys integrated with public transport.

This investment also needs to better address all people's needs and prioritise where need is greatest. Currently, too much investment focuses on improving infrastructure for commuter trips into and out of the city centre. This ignores the travel needs of many people.

Walking and cycling investment should focus more on connecting areas with reduced public transport options, areas of higher deprivation and unemployment, or tackling journeys most likely to contribute to climate change.

Investment needs to prioritise the infrastructure we need to make walking and cycling attractive, welcoming and comfortable – protected space for cycling, better pavements and increased crossing priority, and low-traffic neighbourhoods across all our cities and towns.

49% of UK adults support reallocating road space from cars to be used for people walking, cycling and socialising on our streets, 24% oppose this

Sustrans-commissioned YouGov Survey, 2019

However, we also need to increase revenue funding. This should prioritise subsidised access to, and maintenance of cycles, for all people, including adapted and e-bikes and access to programmes within communities to increase cycling skills and confidence.

Improve public transport operating models and increase investment in public transport

Public transport is the backbone of our transport networks. Without it our cities, towns and roads would be even more car dominated, congested, unsafe and polluted. If we are to reduce GHG emissions from transport, walking and cycling must better integrate with journeys by bus and rail to offer alternatives for longer journeys.

Public transport use declined significantly during lockdown. Bus use outside of London fell by up to 90%, and national rail patronage by 96%.⁴⁷ Since lock-down has been eased, public transport use has risen slightly. However, in order to maintain social distancing on public transport, capacity will be reduced significantly in the region of 70-80% for the foreseeable future.

Capacity reductions are going to put huge pressure on the financial sustainability of public transport. However, over time capacity will gradually increase again.

In the meantime, maintaining and increasing services, especially bus services are vital. Increasing the numbers of buses on our roads will help increase capacity and these services provide a vital mode for the 19% of people living in the UK who do not have access to a car⁴⁸ and have no other transport options, many of whom are key workers.

Good public transport should not only exist in London. All people should have the right to more frequent, affordable and improved services.

Public transport should:

- Be properly invested in to ensure services and capacity are continued, improved and increased wherever possible
- Be made free for people on low incomes or not in work
- Better integrate across different operators with smart ticketing
- Better integrate with other modes
- Meet service standards to increase the frequency, safety and comfort of local services, especially in more rural locations and poorly served areas
- Invest in vehicle fleets to meet air quality and climate change goals



Photo: Jonathan Bewley

Electrify motor transport so that all new cars are electric by 2030 and provide financial support for poorer households who are dependent on road travel

In addition to reducing the use of motor vehicles, if we are to reduce GHG emissions from transport we need to urgently stop using motor vehicles powered by diesel and petrol.

Norway has shown this is achievable in a relatively short timeframe. In January 2020, fully electric car sales rose to a 42.4% market share⁴⁹, up from 20.8% in 2017.⁵⁰ Norway is seeking to phase out the sale of combustion-engine cars by 2025. To incentivise this the Norwegian Government has exempted battery-powered vehicles from taxes imposed on those running on petrol and diesel.

A transition to electric motor vehicles would provide lower carbon jobs for many people already in the manufacturing industry whilst providing new jobs for developing infrastructure.

Schemes to support a transition to electric vehicles should also be targeted at poorer households who are dependent on road travel but might not have the resources to switch.

Overall it is essential that a transition to electric cars goes hand in hand with driving less and traffic demand reduction goals.



Photo: John Linton

3 Ensure fiscal incentives favour public transport, walking and cycling

Green stimulus measures alone are unlikely to be enough. Journeys by sustainable modes need to be more attractive to people and businesses than driving to change behaviours.

Government needs to base transport tax and spend on the Polluter Pays Principle. Driving in the UK is currently subsidised. Drivers do not pay for the full costs of driving, many costs to people's health and the environment are borne elsewhere and by others who do not drive, or drive far less.

83% of adults in the UK think it is important that action is taken to ensure the societal, health and environmental costs and benefits of motor vehicles are fully considered in decision making

Sustrans-commissioned YouGov Survey, 2019

We need to:

- Introduce road pricing and increase fuel duty, fairly
- Introduce a frequent flyer levy and use this to make travel by trains, buses and ferries cheaper, greener and more attractive
- Make public transport affordable or free

Introduce road pricing and increase fuel duty, fairly

The cost of buying, owning and using a car fell by 16% between 1997 and 2016. In contrast, the cost of bus and coach fares increased by 33% and rail fares by 23%.⁵¹

And whilst the upfront costs of car ownership are high, once you own a car and have insurance driving is far cheaper than paying for other modes of transport. This pricing structure incentivises anyone who owns a car to drive more. Many people simply do not want to have to pay more for public transport.

To reduce driving in line with the UK's GHG emission targets, we should introduce road pricing across the strategic road network. Road pricing for longer journeys should complement existing and proposed local schemes, including congestion charges, clean air zones, low emission zones and workplace parking levies in cities. This would provide funding to pay for better alternatives for people including walking, cycling and public transport.

80% of UK adults agree the way most people travel should be good for the environment and the health of the people who live in cities and towns

Sustrans-commissioned YouGov Survey, 2019

Fuel duty has been frozen in the UK since 2010. Studies suggest this freeze has increased UK CO₂ emissions by up to 5%.⁵² At the same time Fuel Duty is used in England to pay for the Roads Investment Strategy. This increases road capacity, inducing further demand and encouraging more car journeys. Fuel duty is vital to reduce car use and associated GHG emissions and should not fund increasing road capacity.

A study in 2002 by the UK Commission for Integrated Transport suggested that replacing fuel duty with road pricing and not charging road users anymore in aggregate would lead to a 48% reduction in traffic across the UK. This is because fuel duty is hidden within the overall cost for fuel. Whether or not this would happen in reality is unknown. Making the costs to drive clearer to people can be an effective incentive for behaviour change.

Steps should be taken to ensure any increases in the cost of driving are fair and do not penalise people who are on lower incomes and are car dependent with no other transport options but to drive.

Introduce a frequent flyer levy and use this to make other options cheaper, greener and more attractive

Whilst demand for flying is likely to fall, people will still take regular flights both within and outside of the UK. A frequent flyer levy taxes people based upon how often they fly. 70% of UK flights are made by 15% of the population, with 57% not flying abroad at all.⁵³ People who fly the most tend to be wealthier and do not currently have to pay for the full social and environmental costs from flying.

Introducing a frequent flier levy could help reduce GHG emissions from flying, whilst supporting investment in public transport. This investment would make public transport more competitive with flying for journeys within the UK.

Make public transport affordable or free

83% of UK adults think it is important that action is taken to enable people to have a good standard of living without needing a car

Sustrans-commissioned YouGov Survey, 2019

Public transport needs to be more attractive than driving if people are to use it. This means we need to improve services and make them cheaper and more affordable for everyone. It should always be cheaper to take a train or bus into a city or town than to drive.

Overall it is vital to keep all fares for public transport as low as possible. At the same time, more should be done to introduce concessionary or free travel to support specific demographic groups. This would help more people access education and employment.

Many young adults are disadvantaged. Unemployment is rising in this group as a result of Covid-19 and jobs which do exist are often in lower paid roles and on zero-hours contracts. There is a strong economic case for making public transport or bus use free for many young adults across the UK.



Photo: Jonathan Bewley

Ensure fiscal incentives favour public transport, walking and cycling
A green and just recovery: build back better transport and healthier places

4 A 'Green New Deal' for jobs and skills

The opportunities to create low-carbon jobs and industries across all sectors have never been greater and with the right government stimulus and business incentives will ensure the UK is leading the way on reducing GHG emissions as we host COP26 next year in Glasgow.

Investing in a green economic recovery could create as many as 1.6m new jobs in Britain as the Covid-19 crisis subsides, including 230,000 jobs in public transport, walking and cycling

Institute for Public Policy Research, 2020⁵⁴

We need to:

- Develop a green jobs programme that creates thousands of new low-carbon jobs
- Protect and reskill existing workers across the transport sector, whilst creating new jobs for low-carbon roles
- Increase workforce diversity across the sector

Develop a green jobs programme that creates thousands of new low-carbon jobs

A green and just transition that helps the UK recover from the economic effects of Covid-19 must create new industries and employment that is tied to our climate change targets and helps reduce economic inequity through levelling up.

Part of this jobs programme will involve reskilling existing workers from high to low carbon roles, whilst at the same time incentivising new green employment and career opportunities for young adults and people from more deprived backgrounds, worst hit through this crisis.

Protect and reskill existing workers across the transport sector, whilst creating new jobs for low-carbon roles

The coronavirus crisis has put one in six jobs in the motor industry at risk and 6,000 workers lost their jobs in June.⁵⁵ Thousands of jobs are also at risk in aviation. These jobs need protecting, however we need to better align these role and their employers with low-carbon activities.

Any government bail outs of the motor industry should therefore contain contractual conditions that firstly protect workers, and secondly ensure more rapid transition to the manufacturing of electric vehicles or the reduction in emissions from flying.

Support should also be given to the cycle industry to increase UK cycle manufacture and production, and maintenance to keep pace with

increasing demand, including electric cycles. Government should engage with the freight industry and provide more incentives for large and small businesses to switch to cargo cycles for first and last mile logistics. We also need to do more to support the use of cargo cycles for urban deliveries linked to new business models in the hospitality, retail and food industries.

Alongside manufacturing we need to increase employment in roles that would redesign streets for people walking and cycling, for electric vehicle charging and for public transport infrastructure. We need to invest in designers, engineers and construction workers to lead a revolution in road space reallocation from highway design to healthy streets and low traffic neighbourhoods for people.

A TUC-commissioned economic assessment of possible Covid-19 recovery projects found that cycling and walking infrastructure is one of the best investments the UK government could make, with the potential to create 103,000 jobs in the next two years. Road building was one of the two lowest scoring projects analysed.⁵⁶

Building cycle lanes and pedestrian infrastructure creates 33 jobs for every £1 million invested. This aside from energy efficiency retrofit projects is more than any other infrastructure project.⁵⁷

Jobs in walking and cycling infrastructure were also found to be good for immediate job creation, requiring non-graduate workers. This has significant potential benefit for many of the sectors and demographics hit hardest by the COVID19 emergency including construction and manufacturing, hospitality and retail.

We urgently need to create additional low-carbon employment for people formerly in other sectors, especially young adults. This includes jobs in transport and urban regeneration and are likely to be entry level roles that can provide job security and career development.

Increase workforce diversity across the sector

We also need to do more to encourage greater diversity in the transport sector and urban regeneration. The UK has the lowest percentage of female engineers in Europe, at 11%⁵⁸, and only 20% of people employed in transport are women.⁵⁹

If we are to design transport and places that work for people the sector must better represent the people we design for.

Organisations across the sector need to champion diversity and inclusion. We need to invest in programmes that help to attract people from underrepresented groups to roles across the sector. And we need to champion and celebrate the people from a range of backgrounds who are already doing great things within our sector and have the potential to inspire others.

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