

Life after lockdown: Briefing Paper 3

# A green and just recovery: healthier places and better transport

Life after lockdown is a series exploring ideas and solutions in response to Covid-19 that help us build back better, creating healthier places and happier people. This is the summary from [briefing paper 3](#).

Sustrans is the charity making it easier for people to walk and cycle. [www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)

© Sustrans July 2020. Sustrans is a registered charity no. 326550 (England and Wales) SC039263 (Scotland).

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.<sup>1</sup>

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

“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, 2018. [Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5C](#).

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

## 1 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

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

## 2 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.<sup>2</sup>

### 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

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, 2019

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

### 3 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

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

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

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

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.<sup>5</sup>

#### 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

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, 2020. [Transforming the economy after Covid-19: A clean, fair and resilient recovery.](#)

## References

- 1 Marmot, et al. 2020. [Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years On.](#)
- 2 Transport for Quality of Life, 2019. [More than electric cars.](#)
- 3 Guardian, 2020. [UK economy to shrink by 8% in 2020, forecasters say.](#)
- 4 Impetus, 2020. <https://impetus.org.uk/youth-employment-group>
- 5 TUC, 2020. [Can an infrastructure stimulus replace UK jobs wiped out by COVID19 crisis?](#)