



Sustrans' asks for the 2021 West of England Combined Authority mayoral elections

Sustrans' manifesto asks

The Covid-19 pandemic is a wake-up call that has both exposed and widened the vast inequity that exists between people and places. At the same time the climate crisis has not gone away. It's imperative that we take urgent action now to create jobs, meet net-zero commitments and improve health.

Towns, cities and regions will be at the heart of building back better. Healthier, fairer places and better transport will underpin the UK's recovery. We must act now. The upcoming mayoral election for the West of England Combined Authority couldn't be more important.

Ask 1: Commit to increasing funding and delivery of ambitious walking and cycling schemes

This should include making temporary schemes permanent, prioritising local walking and cycling infrastructure plans, and ensuring residents and businesses are engaged and consulted. The National Cycle Network should also be improved for everyday journeys in urban areas and to better connect people to nature and green space.

75% of residents in Bike Life cities across the UK support increasing space for walking and cycling on high streets and 59% support restricting through-traffic on residential streets.

Across the UK, cycling and walking could create 103,000 jobs in the next two years, many of which are good for immediate job creation, requiring non-graduate workers.

The West of England Combined Authority needs to commit significant funding to enable the growth in active travel journeys we need to meet our climate goals.

We need an infrastructure and behaviour change delivery and support programme with the aim of meeting the government's target of 50% of all journeys in urban areas to be walked or cycled.

The current commitment of less than £2 per person per year will mean we fall significantly short of meeting this target.

Ask 2: Make 20-minute neighbourhoods a central principle in local planning, transport, health and economic policy

This will lead to walkable neighbourhoods with more services and amenities within a 20-minute return walk of where people live. Attractive cycling and public transport networks will enable people to reach other areas. 20-minute neighbourhoods support local development, high streets, jobs and the local economy while reducing transport poverty and isolation.

Many of us have been living more locally since lockdown and have benefited from access to green space, shops and other services on our doorsteps. But too often people have been isolated. Everyone should be able to reach essential services, green space and connect with others, no matter their demographic background.

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.

Yet evidence suggests most new settlements and urban extensions are located and designed in ways that exacerbate car dependency.

The Spatial Development Strategy must enable residents in the West of England to have access to jobs, skills and services a short walk away from where they live.

We would like to see the principles of the 20-minute neighbourhood adopted by the Spatial Development Strategy as a key planning principle in determining the sustainability of future development across the West of England.

Access to key services such as food retailers, education settings, banks, jobs and green spaces a short distance from home will be key to enabling a low-carbon, resilient West of England.

Ask 3: Ensure policy and investment in walking, cycling and public transport prioritises people who are disadvantaged or marginalised

Design walking and cycling plans to address, and be evaluated against, how they reduce inequity. Prioritise infrastructure improvements in more isolated neighbourhoods, especially those which suffer from deprivation. Back this up with programmes and support for disadvantaged and marginalised groups to make walking and cycling inclusive.

The Marmot Review published in February 2020 reported that inequalities have grown in the last 10 years across the UK.

Covid-19 has exacerbated inequity further and disadvantaged and marginalised groups have been disproportionately affected in terms of health, education and employment.

Walking and cycling can help reduce social inequity by increasing access to jobs, education and services, whilst improving health and social inclusion.

We share the aspiration set out in the West of England's Local Industrial Strategy to enable "the region to go further in driving

inclusion and addressing inequalities”.

Our covid recovery needs to be fast and fair and we believe this should include targeted transport investment in our most deprived communities.

Our Bike Life reports highlight that 15% of residents from socio-economic groups D and E feel that cycling is not for people like them. This group of apprentices, manual labourers and the long-term unemployed are also the least likely to own a vehicle.

Ensuring good quality walking and cycling access to skills and employment opportunities will reduce health, wellbeing and economic inequalities. The next Mayor needs to invest in a multi-year programme of behaviour change activity that specifically targets these communities.

Ask 4: Take immediate action to make local transport zero-carbon, improve air quality and create low-carbon jobs

This must include steps to reduce car use as well as electrifying vehicles. We must also continue existing commitments to reduce air pollution, including introducing Clean Air Zones and take more action to tackle particulate matter. This must be done fairly and alongside improvements to make walking, cycling and public transport more attractive than driving.

The opportunities to create low-carbon jobs and industries across all sectors have never been greater. National and local government action is required to ensure the UK is leading the way on reducing GHG emissions as we host COP26 in Glasgow.

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

Air pollution already costs thousands of lives across the UK, and recent evidence shows air pollution is linked to more Covid-19 deaths. Preventative action must be taken.

Road based transport is responsible for 32% of all carbon emissions in the West of England, and while other sectors have reduced their impact on the environment over the past decade, transport has not.

WECA has declared a Climate Emergency committing to net-zero carbon emissions by 2030. The Combined Authority's own calculations show that transport emissions need to drop by 18% every year, and car use in the region needs to drop to no more than 20% of all journeys.

With mass transit at least 12 years away we need a credible, funded delivery plan for active travel that can achieve this target.

References

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