



Sustrans' asks for the 2022 London borough elections

Sustrans' manifesto asks

If you are born in a more affluent neighbourhood of some London boroughs, your life expectancy could be 5-10 years longer than someone born in a less affluent neighbourhood.¹ To improve the health, and other quality of life outcomes for the most disadvantaged in your borough, you should enable a dramatic increase in walking, wheeling² and cycling.

Walking, wheeling and cycling measures enable physical activity,³ quickly cut traffic levels,⁴ and free up space for the community.⁵

We ask you to make four commitments to the electorate in the forthcoming elections:

Ask 1: Demonstrate that you are closing the gaps between disadvantaged groups of people and others in health, transport, environment and community outcomes

Decisions over transport, public spaces, health, housing and the environment either entrench gaps between the better and worse off, or reduce them. Some US cities and London boroughs have put in place Equity Frameworks⁶ to ensure gaps in transport access, health, access to a quality environment and community life are measured and reduced over time.

“Urban design is not neutral, it either perpetuates or reduces social inequity”.⁷

Your borough's plans should all start with the objective of raising living standards for the most disadvantaged first. These include all those people with protected characteristics, as well as those on lower incomes. Collecting quality data is the starting point, and co-designing solutions with local people becomes the next step.

Ask 2: Deliver an ambitious walking, wheeling and cycling programme prioritised on your most disadvantaged residents

High quality walking, wheeling and cycling schemes work. In Hackney, they have helped reduce the share of residents' trips made by car to just 13%.⁸ Following the introduction of traffic restrictions in Walthamstow, only 2% said they would “scrap the scheme and go back to how it was before”.⁹

But the walking, wheeling and cycling revolution in London is not benefitting all Londoners equally. For example, people that cycle in London are more likely to be from more advantaged backgrounds.¹⁰

You should, as a minimum, double the length of separated cycleways, filtered streets, and school streets, prioritised on the areas of most need – areas of the highest road danger, the worst health outcomes, and fewest transport options.

To ensure uptake of cycling is broader than it has been to date among the population, you should empower people with the skills, confidence, equipment and information they need to walk, wheel and cycle. Spend 20-30% of your overall walking, wheeling and cycling budget on such measures, and prioritise disadvantaged communities with these projects.

Ask 3: Remove the discriminatory access barriers which prevent people accessing traffic-free walking, wheeling and cycling routes

Millions of Londoners lack good access to high quality green space, often in more disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Fewer children in London regularly visit a park or green space than in any other part of England.¹¹ This isn't just due to lack of green space – it is also due to green spaces being inaccessible. Access barriers – often installed to prevent people on mopeds entering the space – have the unintended impact of making public spaces inaccessible for many people using wheelchairs, buggies, mobility scooters and some cycles.



Example of a restrictive access barrier in London

“It’s heartbreaking to be stopped by a physical barrier when as a disabled person, I’ve had to overcome so many in life already”.¹²

London has many inspiring parks, rivers and green walking and cycling routes, such as the Thames path and National Cycle Network. But these are in need of upgrading, improving and expanding. The quickest and cheapest way to do this in your borough is to remove all access barriers to ensure they are accessible for everyone.

Ask 4: Reimagine your high streets as social, community spaces easily accessible for everyone

Our high streets, as well as local rows of shops, are in crisis. But it's not just a crisis of demand, it's also a crisis of the imagination. We need to reimagine our high streets as social, community spaces which people of all ages and abilities can easily walk and cycle to. Places where high quality public services are provided alongside thriving commercial offers. Places where people want to be.

Over 85% of Business Improvement Districts say that a good environment for walking, cycling, and spending time in is important for business performance.¹³

You should help revitalise local high streets by investing in traffic-free public spaces and by improving accessibility and safety for people walking, wheeling and cycling. You should keep open local amenities, as Lewisham has recently done with its public swimming pool in Deptford.¹⁴ And you should build only car-free new developments, ensuring you add to demand for local shops as the population grows.

References

- 1 <https://www.merton.gov.uk/assets/Documents/www2/Annual-Health-Report2018.pdf>
- 2 By 'wheeling' we mean the use of wheelchairs (manual and electric) and mobility scooters
- 3 <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/our-blog/opinion/2021/january/safe-walking-and-cycling-infrastructure-reduces-health-inequalities>
- 4 Based on evidence from the Waltham Forest Mini-Holland 'high dose' areas (<https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/ebj89/>), the Walthamstow Low Traffic Neighbourhood in Waltham Forest (https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/prioritising_people.pdf and <http://www.enjoywalthamforest.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/2017-08-23-WV-report-FINAL.pdf>), Hackney's reduction in car use (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/173Yz8wZuSdJnXb15q0dSslhWzEkRGkBo/view>), individual case studies of residents switching away from cars, and the 70 roadspace reallocation schemes listed in Disappearing traffic? The story so far (https://nacto.org/docs/usdg/disappearing_traffic_cairns.pdf)
- 5 <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/our-blog/projects/2021/london/how-were-increasing-childrens-activity-and-play-in-southwark>
- 6 <https://www.oaklandca.gov/projects/oakland-equity-indicators>
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- 13 <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/healthy-streets-a-business-view.pdf>
- 14 <https://853.london/2021/06/24/deptfords-wavelengths-leisure-pool-saved-after-campaigners-make-a-splash>