

A framework for Cheltenham's new Air Quality Action Plan

Air pollution



Sustainable travel



Climate emergency



**Air Quality
Action Plan**

Public health



'Livable' town



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Acknowledgments

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Summary

The Air Quality Action Plan is the mechanism by which we can tackle air pollution, reduce carbon emissions from transport, improve public health, and ensure Cheltenham thrives by becoming a more 'livable' town.

Cheltenham: green, healthy, happy

making it easier, cheaper, healthier and more enjoyable to get around town on foot, bike or by public transport

5 big moves

Zero emission zoning

- The whole town becomes a zero-emission zone by 2030 – in stages
- Urban logistics hubs to decarbonise last-mile deliveries
- Charging infrastructure for e-cargo bikes and e-vans

Green bus revolution

- All electric bus fleet
- Much more frequent services – funded by a Workplace Parking Levy
- New park and rides at other access roads to Cheltenham

Prioritising active travel

- Start planning and building gold-standard cycle routes on the main desire lines in town
- A citizen-led programme to improve walkability at key destinations in all neighbourhoods
- 20mph speed limit in most areas

Transforming the town centre

- Traffic cell initiative to restrict private cars travelling through the centre, prioritising public transport, cycling and walking instead.
- Urban design to improve public spaces and support active travel

Managing parking demand

- Re-allocate road and parking space for more productive use – including segregated cycleways
- School streets to restrict parking outside schools

Why the Air Quality Action Plan is important

Everything is connected...

Air pollution is a public health emergency. Because traffic is such a significant source of air pollution, we can't clean up the air we breathe without a major shift towards more sustainable transport within the town.

The council has recognised the climate emergency – and set itself an ambitious 'carbon zero by 2030' target. Over 30% of UK carbon emissions come from road transport – so we need to drastically cut road transport in order to reduce carbon emissions.

A shift towards active travel is also the biggest single 'preventative health' step we could take towards improving public health – and thus reduce the overwhelming pressure on our health service.

And no town or city will thrive in the future unless it becomes 'livable' – with lots of vibrant public spaces, where walking, cycling and public transport are a joy, where there is affordable housing... That means that urban design has to be based on people's well being and mobility – not on continuing to encourage motor traffic.

So making it *easier, cheaper, healthier and more enjoyable to get around Cheltenham on foot, bike and public transport* sits at the heart of four strategic objectives:

- reducing air pollution
- taking action on the climate emergency
- improving public health
- ensuring the town thrives by becoming more 'livable'.

The Air Quality Action Plan
is also the
Sustainable Transport Plan
and also a big part of the
Cheltenham Zero plan

The Air Quality Action Plan can be the catalyst for change

The new Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) could be the best way to make these changes happen.

An AQAP has powerful authority both in terms of

- the science relating to air pollution
- its legal standing.

People are now much more aware of the health risks of air pollution. Cheltenham's AQAP should follow the lead of Oxford's AQAP, and have public health as the driver of the plan. The changes proposed should be 'science-based' – *to reduce air pollution by the necessary amount, we need to reduce traffic by x%.*

This won't be the best approach to changing people's behaviour (see later section 'Winning hearts and minds') – but it is crucial to have rock-solid scientific data as a foundation that cannot be easily attacked by a vociferous motoring lobby, or by other groups hoping to whip up opposition to the AQAP.

UK air quality legislation mandates a local council to take action on pollution. But to take the necessary steps also requires the co-operation of the county council, which has responsibility for transport. The House of Commons Library paper on 'Local Government Air Quality Responsibilities' recognises that in two-tier authorities, this could lead to deadlock, and states: "any disagreements between district and county councils over action plan proposals can be referred to the Secretary of State."

Cheltenham Borough Council should *present the evidence for the active travel provision which is needed to reduce traffic by the required levels.* If the county council doesn't engage, then the disagreement should be immediately referred to the Secretary of State.

The scope, structure and ambition of the AQAP

Ambition and objectives

There is agreement within CBC that the AQAP should be ambitious both in terms of the target(s) that is set, and also geographical scope.

In other words:

- to aim for an air quality target significantly better than the current legal limits;
- to have this target apply to the whole town, not just the small Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in the town centre.

Setting a target

Scientists and public health bodies believe that the current legal limits for Nitrogen Dioxide (annual average of 40 ug/m³) and particulates (annual average of PM_{2.5} of 25 ug/m³) are too high. The government came close to setting the PM_{2.5} limit at the World Health Organization threshold, of 10ug/m³ – but backed off at the last moment. However, the evidence of unacceptable health risks at the current legal limits of 40 ug/25 ug is building. It is likely that these limits will be significantly lowered during the lifespan of the AQAP.

CBC should therefore follow Oxford's example, and go beyond the current legal target, and *set a Nitrogen Dioxide target of 30 ug/m³ by the end of the 5 year AQAP period, across the whole of the town.*

Levels of particulates should also reduce if Nitrogen Dioxide levels fall – although there is not a direct relationship between these two pollutants. Given that CBC has only just started collecting its own data on particulates, setting a target for particulates reduction should be reassessed as part of the first or second annual review of the AQAP.

Geographical scope

The current AQMA is restricted to a few hundred metres of a single town centre road. But transport within – and in and out of – a town like Cheltenham, is a complex, interconnected system.

Measures focussed on diverting traffic away from the AQMA area – in the absence of other measures looking at the whole transport system across Cheltenham – will simply move the problem around.

Modelling by Bureau Veritas also shows there are illegal hotspots in areas outside the AQMA already (Princess Elizabeth Way area, Arle Court roundabout area). The West Cheltenham Transport Improvements by GCC run the risk of attracting more traffic into more central areas of the town.

Therefore any transport planning aimed at reducing pollution needs to look at the town as a whole. Looking at a small area in isolation will produce unintended consequences elsewhere.

A 'dynamic' plan

The new AQAP is meant to be ready by September 2021 – just a few months away. It is not possible in this limited amount of time to work through the details of a plan that would meet a 40ug NO₂ target in the AQMA area – let alone a more ambitious target covering the whole town.

We therefore propose an approach where the AQAP *evolves through annual review* and becomes more specific over the 5 year period. The first iteration of the plan, Sept 2021, should:

- set a Nitrogen Dioxide target to be achieved by the end of the 5 year period
- publicise the 5 big moves which need to be introduced over the 5 to 10 years to achieve this target – to give businesses and the community as much time as possible to plan for these changes
- kick off the citizen engagement and design process to implement these areas of change.

Winning hearts and minds

Achieving both an ambitious air quality target, and also the Cheltenham Zero target, will require major changes in behaviour for everyone who lives, works in, and visits Cheltenham.

So building the Air Quality Action Plan needs to be radically different to how most local authorities have tackled this in the past. Instead of officers, councillors and consultants populating a standard local authority AQAP template, which is then quietly published to the council website... we need a major campaign to win hearts and minds behind a positive vision of the future.

Some of the critical elements of such a campaign are:

- a central proposition which encapsulates the vision
- a clear rationale for why we need to make a big shift in a new direction
- the 4 or 5 areas where things need to change
- a commitment to 'co-creation' of the future with the community
- engaging communications across all media (particularly video and social media)
- leadership from the borough council...
- ... supported by a wide-ranging coalition of local groups and opinion formers

A proposition

This needs more thought: but an example could be:

Cheltenham – green, healthy, happy

'Green' and 'healthy' are obvious: a town that is serious about tackling the climate emergency and air pollution. 'Happy' is a recognition that people are happier in environments with green spaces and less pollution. (see <https://worldhappiness.report/ed/2020/how-environmental-quality-affects-our-happiness/>)

The rationale

The Oxford AQAP and Birmingham's Transport Plan are good examples of how other local authorities are forcefully making the case to their citizens that:

- the climate emergency means we need to reduce traffic emissions
- air pollution is causing a health crisis, and the

biggest contributor is traffic

- we will be healthier and happier if we design our town around making it easier for people, not cars, to get around.

The 5 big moves

A persuasive message has to be a simple one. The steps we need to take have to be grouped into a maximum of 5 'headlines' which can be easily explained as essential – because they are the only steps that will have the necessary impact. It is crucial to avoid presenting a long laundry list of measures, the majority of which will have minimal impact.

Co-creation

Local residents should be fully involved in the evolution of the Air Quality Action Plan – using all available citizen engagement methods. Local authority consultation has traditionally been top-down, with no meaningful way for citizens to shape the proposals. People will only champion change if they feel they have been a part of creating it.

Engaging communications

CBC needs to hire a professional communications agency to persuade residents of the need for change. Campaigns could highlight that *Cheltenham is the most dangerous place in Gloucestershire to walk and cycle*; local doctors could front a campaign talking about the number of people affected by air pollution they are seeing in local hospitals, for example.

Leadership

Councillors need to unite behind the big objectives of tackling carbon emissions and air pollution – and make it the defining purpose of the council.

Building a coalition

A start has been made with the community groups and businesses that have come together under the Cheltenham Zero umbrella. But *all local health professionals* (particularly consultants and doctors) should be approached and asked to endorse the objectives of the plan, on public health grounds.

The 5 big moves

We already know the most effective ways to tackle carbon emissions and air pollution from traffic. There are proven examples of success in hundreds of towns and cities around the world. Forward thinking local authorities in the UK are all adopting the same core strategies.

All of the key areas below are also discussed in the 'Connecting Cheltenham' report recently republished by CBC. We know the 'what'... we need to move rapidly to 'how', 'where', and 'when'.

1: Zero Emission zoning

The Cheltenham 'Zero by 2030' target means that *the whole of Cheltenham must be a zero emission zone by 2030*. This needs to be recognised and agreed and publicised immediately – so that residents and businesses have as much notice as possible – and then we work out how to do this by stages.

2: Green bus revolution

Buses are the easiest, cheapest and quickest way to improve public transport. Building a tram service or even a new road can take years. Better bus services can be delivered in months, and for relatively small sums of money by the standards of transport spending. And all-electric buses are available now.

3: Prioritising active travel

Walking and cycling will become how most people get around most of the time. Cheltenham is a small, flat town. There is no reason why we shouldn't match continental towns where typically 66% of all journeys are on foot, bike, or public transport. Cars should no longer dominate street life around homes and schools. All quiet residential roads should have a speed limit of 20mph (as recommended also in 'Connecting Cheltenham') so that people feel safe cycling and walking.

4: Transforming the town centre

Cheltenham already has some lovely central parks and the pedestrianised Promenade. But we should

transform the town centre by creating a much wider network of pedestrianised/ shared streets and public spaces, integrated with public transport services and cycling infrastructure. Access to the town centre should be limited with no through trips.

5: Managing parking demand

Parking should be used as a way of managing demand through availability, pricing and restrictions. Where development potential exists, land currently occupied by car parking should be put to more productive use – contributing towards transforming the town centre.

Avoiding a 'Boots Corner' reaction

People are instinctively resistant to change – particularly if they feel that proposed changes are restricting them in some way. And there will be a vocal small minority of motorists who will oppose any constraints on their ability to drive and park where they like.

So as well as having a powerful communication campaign highlighting the benefits for everyone, and wide citizen engagement in designing the detail of the plans, it is also important that:

- alternative provision is always in place at the same time – or before – any restrictions on car use are introduced
- we avoid isolated measures that can be characterised as just moving congestion to a different area for the benefit of one community at the expense of another, e.g. Low Traffic Neighborhoods
- Stakeholder groups who might react negatively are identified in advance, and their concerns addressed. For example, retailers who feel they might be adversely affected are shown evidence that promoting active travel and pedestrianisation always increases footfall and spend.

Zero emission zoning



A zero emissions town

The government has published *Decarbonising Transport*, which recognises we need to achieve zero emissions across every form of transport.



This objective sits at the heart of our response to the climate emergency. And because transport is such a major contributor to air pollution, it is also critical in reducing air pollution.

The borough council is committed to becoming a zero carbon town by 2030.

So it follows that Cheltenham must have zero transport emissions across the whole town, by 2030.

It is not sufficient just to hope that everyone switches to an electric vehicle. There won't be sufficient renewable energy to replace the fossil fuels currently used to power our petrol and diesel

transport system. And current levels of traffic cause congestion and also contribute to pollution through tyre and brake wear.

There are 3 broad policy areas needed for Cheltenham to become a zero-emissions town by 2030.

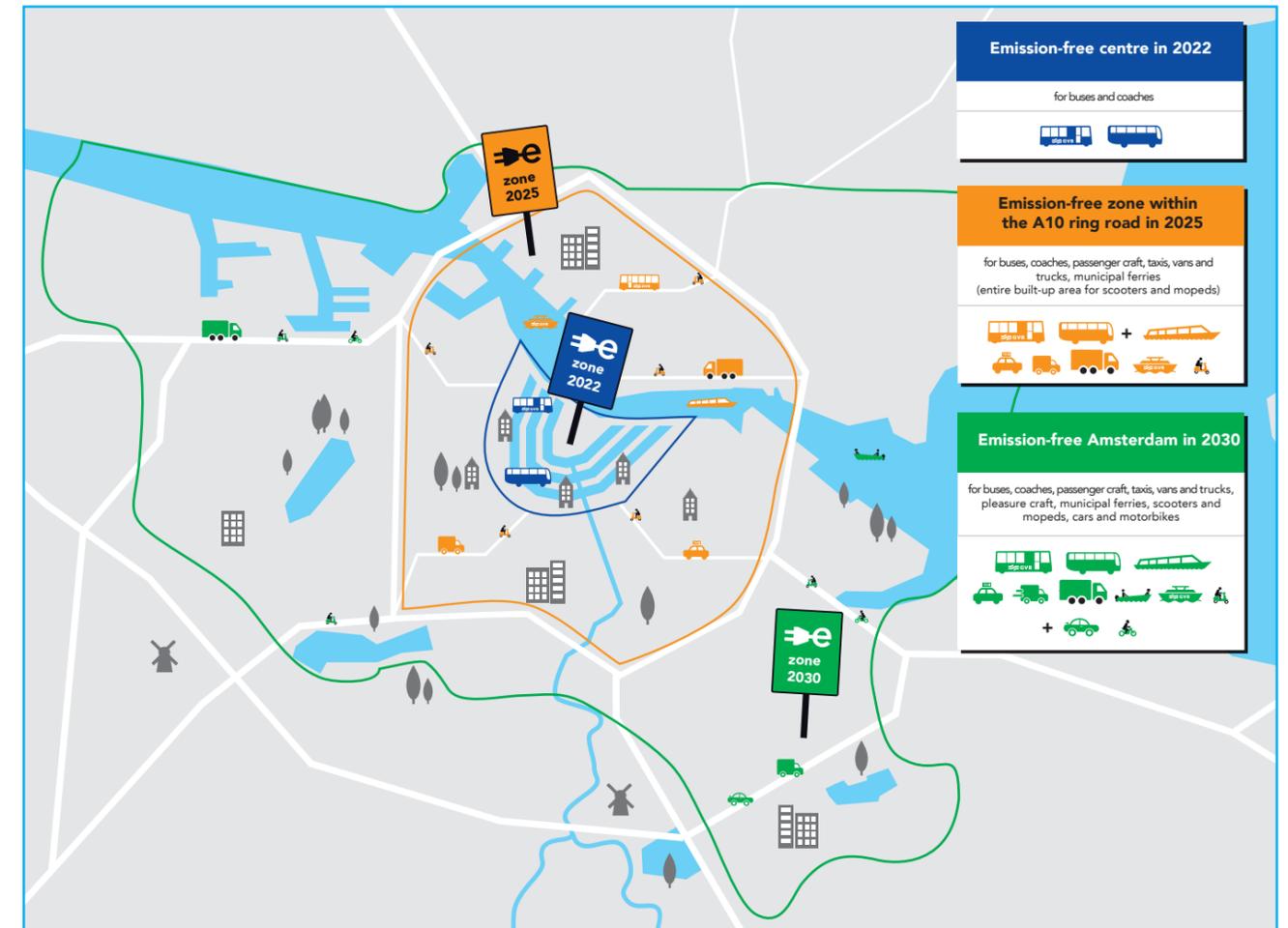
1. a staged process of introducing and extending the clean air zone
2. an attractive palette of alternatives to private transport that drivers see as cheaper, and equally or more convenient
3. provision of infrastructure that enables last-mile cargo distribution to be zero-emission.

Introducing and extending clean air zones

We need to deal with the most heavily polluted places first: the town centre. And we need to give residents, businesses and delivery companies time to adapt.

So it makes sense to follow the example of places like Amsterdam and take a staged approach. (see diagram opposite).

How Amsterdam is expanding its emission zones over time



For Cheltenham, this could mean:

- From 2022, diesel cars with emissions standard engines 0, 1, 2, 3 will no longer be allowed within the town centre
- From 2024, goods traffic will only be allowed within the town centre with a zero-emission engine or an emission standard 6 engine
- From 2027 only traffic with zero-emission engines will be allowed in the town centre
- From 2030, the entire town will be emission-free for all forms of transport.

Birmingham is taking a different approach – charging for non-compliant vehicles if they enter the central Clean Air Zone, rather than simply banning them. The borough council should consult about the different options – but it needs to quickly signal the aim of the whole town being a zero-emission zone by 2030.

The council will also need to switch its fleet of Ubico waste trucks to electric power by 2025.

Alternatives to private transport

Providing other ways for people to get around are the second and third big moves, the *Green Bus revolution*, and *Prioritising Active Travel*. These are discussed in the following sections.

Decarbonising 'last mile' cargo distribution

As *Decarbonising Transport* states: "a huge opportunity exists to transform 'last-mile' deliveries, ensuring an integrated, clean and sustainable delivery system."

Van traffic has increased by over 100% since 1990 – and is set to increase further as consumer behaviours change, and more and more goods are bought online. And HGVs travelling long distances will be one of the last transport modes to switch to electric – and are unlikely to have done so by 2030.

Zero-emissions zoning (continued)

So there are three policy steps the borough council needs to take to support the decarbonisation of 'last mile' deliveries:

- support the establishment of an urban logistics hub on the west side of Cheltenham, close to the motorway
- support the establishment of small e-cargo bike hubs within the centre of town
- support the establishment of a fast charging park for local delivery companies and businesses using electric vans.

A detailed report on the benefits of urban logistics hubs is available [here](#).

An urban logistics hub to the west of Cheltenham

Freight companies and parcel operators are impatient to be able to set up small local urban logistics hubs to allow goods to be sorted near to the end destination. This allows for deliveries going to the same area (e.g. the same postcode sector, street or even building) to be rationalised and moved on to low and zero emission vehicles, which supports

- a reduction in total vehicle mileage
- better utilisation of vehicles
- a reduction in the number of delivery vehicles
- a reduction in emissions.

The council should publicise its support for such initiatives through the planning system, and help identify potential sites.

E-cargo bike hubs

Micro logistics hubs for e-cargo bikes should be trialled in Cheltenham as soon as possible. There are successful case studies from other parts of the UK. These include:

- use of e-cargo bikes for the council's own operations
- council provided 'pool' e-cargo bikes for residents or businesses to hire

The council should work up a specific proposal for a trial, either using council property, vacant city centre space, or providing premises on an existing car park.



It should also provide support through the planning system for buildings and other sites such as car parks to be re-purposed for businesses offering an e-cargo delivery service (e.g. the [EcoFleet](#) style business model.)

It should also liaise with companies (such as food delivery companies) already making use of e-bikes for deliveries in Cheltenham to assess their needs and establish how to encourage more companies in similar and other sectors to switch to e-bike use.

A fast charging park for local delivery vehicles

To support local businesses wanting to switch their own deliveries to electric vans, the council should build a dedicated fast charging park, again using a repurposed car park.



The Energy Saving Trust have produced a report for local authorities on electrifying the last mile, available [here](#).

Green bus revolution



The new National Bus Strategy changes the game...

The new [National Bus Strategy](#) announced in March this year, backed by £3bn of investment marks a major change in government thinking, and should help local authorities quickly improve bus services.

It ends the fragmented fully commercialised market and encourages operators and local councils to enter into partnerships or franchising agreements. The government's ambition is that local authorities and bus companies work together to deliver "bus services that are so frequent that passengers can just 'turn up and go' – no longer needing to rely on a traditional timetable, and having the confidence they won't wait more than a few minutes."

This means that local authorities will have much greater powers (through either franchising, or 'enhanced partnerships') to work with operators to drive change.

It also requires local authorities to produce a Bus Improvement Plan by October 2021, *updated annually* and reflected in the authority's Local Transport Plan. They need to be developed in collaboration with operators, community transport providers and, critically, the local community including residents and businesses, with *a significant focus on driving improvements for passengers*.

Specifically, the Bus Improvement Plan must set out how air pollution targets will be met, the actions being taken to transform the fleet to zero-emission, and where bus priority measures are needed.

This means that Gloucestershire County Council must significantly revise its Local Transport Plan to take account of the new National Bus Strategy and also produce a regularly updated Bus Improvement Plan. It is therefore a vitally important opportunity for the borough council to quickly develop a high level plan that delivers on the ambition in the National Bus Strategy.

Green bus revolution (continued)

Cheltenham's Bus Improvement Plan

We suggest that the key objectives that Cheltenham should feed into the Bus Improvement Plan are:

1. a much more frequent and better connected public transport service on the key routes into and across town.
2. switch all buses from diesel to electric as soon as possible.
3. Park and ride on all north, south and east sides of the town

More frequent and better connected bus services

Using the data contained in the Connecting Cheltenham report, the borough council should analyse the commuter trips to the biggest employers in Cheltenham. These are the journeys where we need to provide a bus alternative to private cars.

Doing this unlocks a range of benefits: reduced air pollution; reduced congestion. Reduced congestion frees up road space for segregated cycleways.

We should follow the approach being used in Oxford, where a Workplace Parking Levy is used to fund increased bus services. The reduction in congestion means there is no need for a dedicated bus lane, freeing up road space for segregated cycleways.



An excellent example of provision for public transport, cycling and walking in Manchester.

The employers who will be most impacted by the WPL will include GCHQ, Gloucestershire NHS/ Cheltenham Hospital, University of Gloucestershire, Spirax Sarco, Kohler Mira, SuperDry and UCAS, so the initial focus should be on improving bus services that link these companies to the town centre, the railway station, and park and rides.

All-electric buses

Alongside the National Bus Strategy, the government has also launched a consultation on when to end the sale of diesel buses, to help drive through the decarbonisation of public transport.

Stagecoach have estimated that the marginal cost of replacing its fleet of 105 diesel buses with all electric buses would be circa £22.5m, plus circa £5m on charging infrastructure. 75% of this 'gap' would be funded by a successful ZEBRA bid – leaving an 'extra' cost of circa £6.75m to make their buses all-electric. However, the National Bus Strategy confirms that more funding will be available, and that the Bus Service Operators Grant, which currently operates as a fossil-fuel subsidy will be reformed. Electric buses are also cheaper to run.

It is also worth noting that *significant bus priority reduces journey times* which would mean that less buses are needed to cover a given timetable.

The Bus Improvement Plan should therefore *commit the local bus operator to switch to all electric buses* in synchronisation with the Zero Emission zoning across Cheltenham – ideally *by the end of 2024*. Milton Keynes is an example of an authority that has worked through what is involved in the [Milton Keynes All-Electric Bus Town Bid](#).

New Park and Rides

We need additional park and rides on the southern edge of Cheltenham (Shurdington Road/A46); the eastern side (Oxford Road/A40) and the northern side (Cheltenham Racecourse/A435). As well as frequent bus connections, these should also offer secure bike parks.

Prioritising active travel

What is proposed in this section is simply following the government's own vision: taken from 'Gear Change: a bold vision for cycling and walking', Department of Transport.



A bold future vision for a new era

We have a clear picture of a future we want to see, a vision for a transformation in our transport system, that will benefit us all.

England will be a great walking and cycling nation

Places will be truly walkable. A travel revolution in our streets, towns and communities will have made cycling a mass form of transit. Cycling and walking will be the natural first choice for many journeys with half of all journeys in towns and cities being cycled or walked by 2030.

A bold future vision of cycling and walking in England:



Healthier, happier and greener communities

Peoples' health and quality of life is improved by more people walking and cycling; the number of short journeys made by car is vastly reduced, meaning people from all parts of our communities around the country can enjoy the benefits of cleaner, healthier, safer and quieter streets.

Safer streets

Nobody is afraid to cycle; every child is confident and safe walking or cycling to school; all road users treat each other with mutual respect.



Convenient and accessible travel

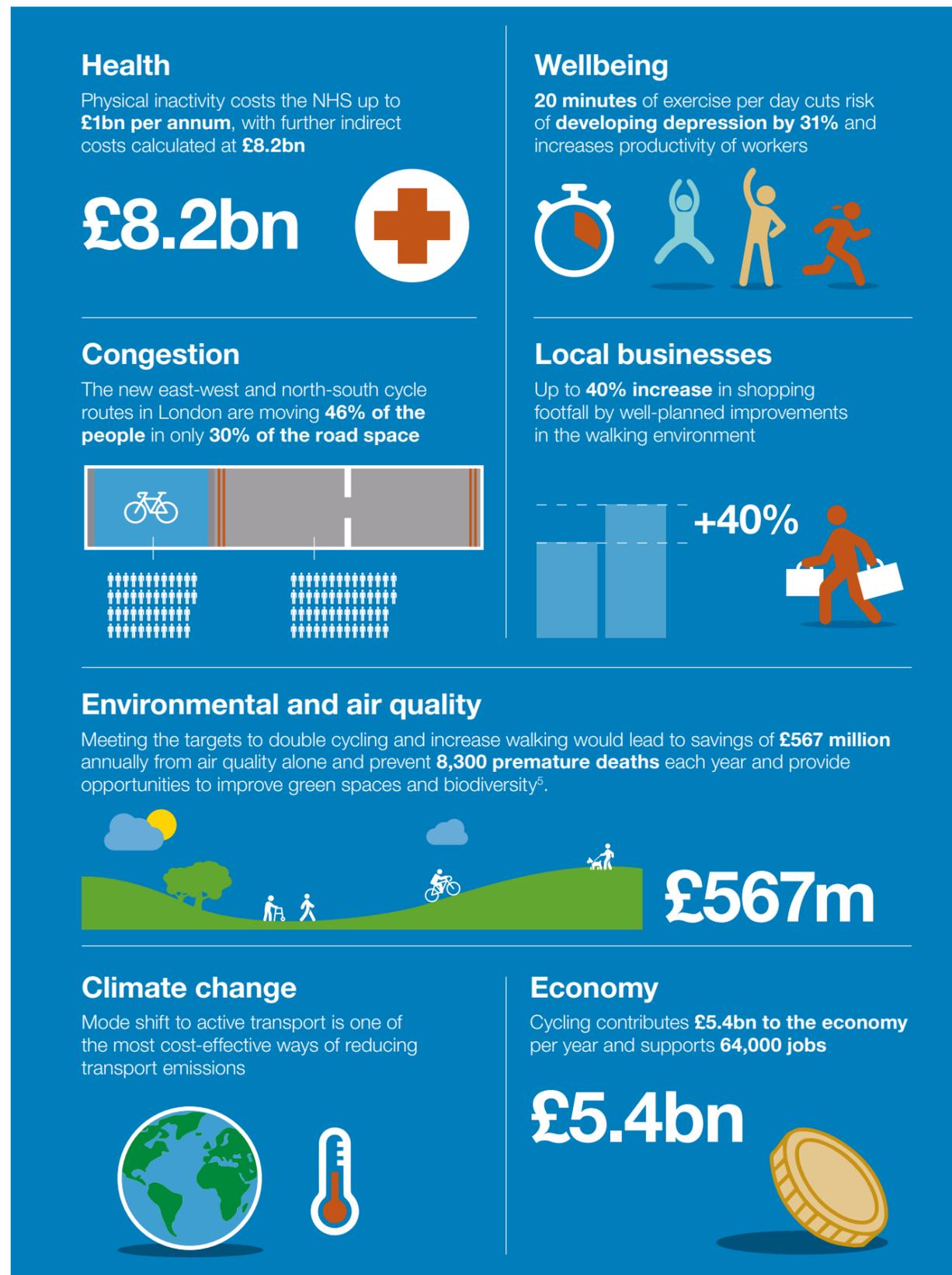
Cycling and walking are recognised as the most convenient, desirable and affordable way to travel in our local areas; more women and disadvantaged groups enjoy walking and cycling as part of their daily journeys; everybody has opportunities to take up walking and cycling.

At the heart of transport decision-making

Better cycling and walking infrastructure has allowed more efficient use of road space, to the benefit of all road users; cycling and walking routes are well connected with wider public transport services; cycling and walking measures are no longer seen as an afterthought but have moved to the very heart of considerations for all transport policy and planning, at all levels of leadership.

Prioritising active travel (continued)

And here is the government's own summary of the benefits of prioritising active travel. Making a step change in cycling and walking is no longer radical – just government policy.



Cycling



Cheltenham could be the Copenhagen of the Cotswolds

Cheltenham has tremendous potential to be a town with high levels of cycling, with favourable topography and a high number of local trip generators. The [national propensity to cycle tool](#) shows that, with the right conditions, some areas of Cheltenham could achieve over 40% of commutes by cycle, with equally high cycling to school potential linked to this. (see diagrams overleaf.)

The vision

A modal switch for the majority of all journeys in the 2 to 3 mile range, encouraging those who are not confident on a bike, whilst not at the same time creating barriers to the existing, more confident cyclist.

To enable everyone to be able to *cycle from where they live*:

- To *where they work* within the environs of Cheltenham
- To be able to *cycle to secondary school* unaccompanied

- To be able to *cycle to key public transport nodes* whether bus or rail
- To have spaces at destination points to *park securely*.

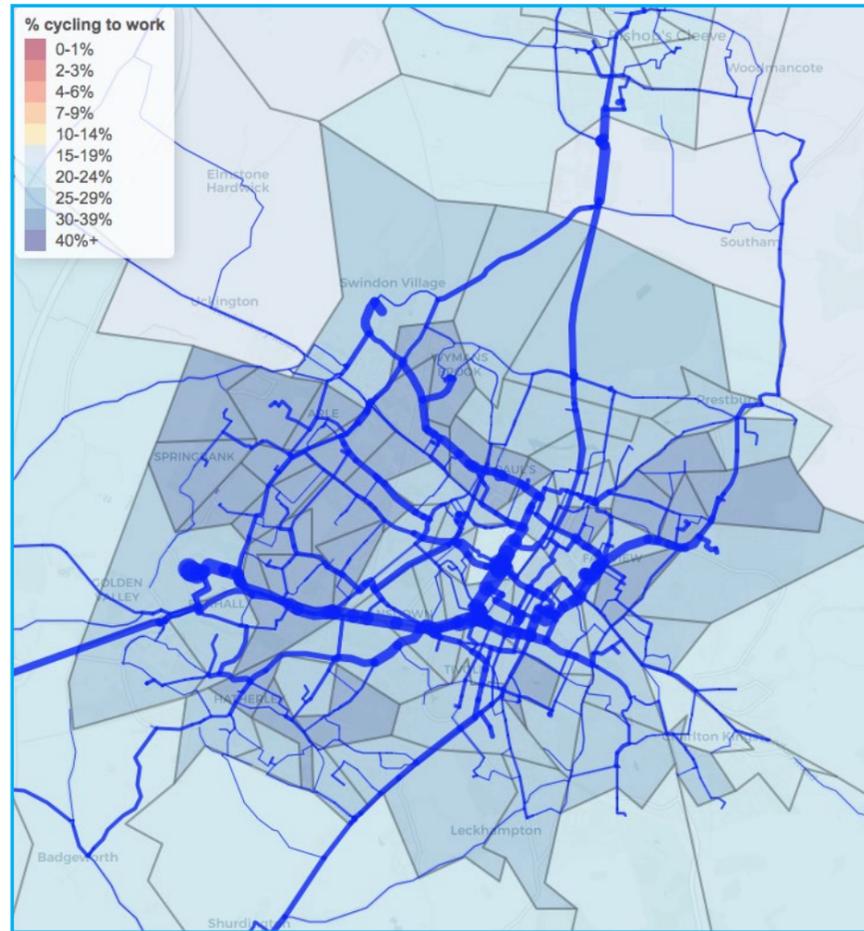
We know how to design and build the infrastructure

The Department of Transport has published a guide which learns from long experience in Denmark, the Netherlands and Germany.

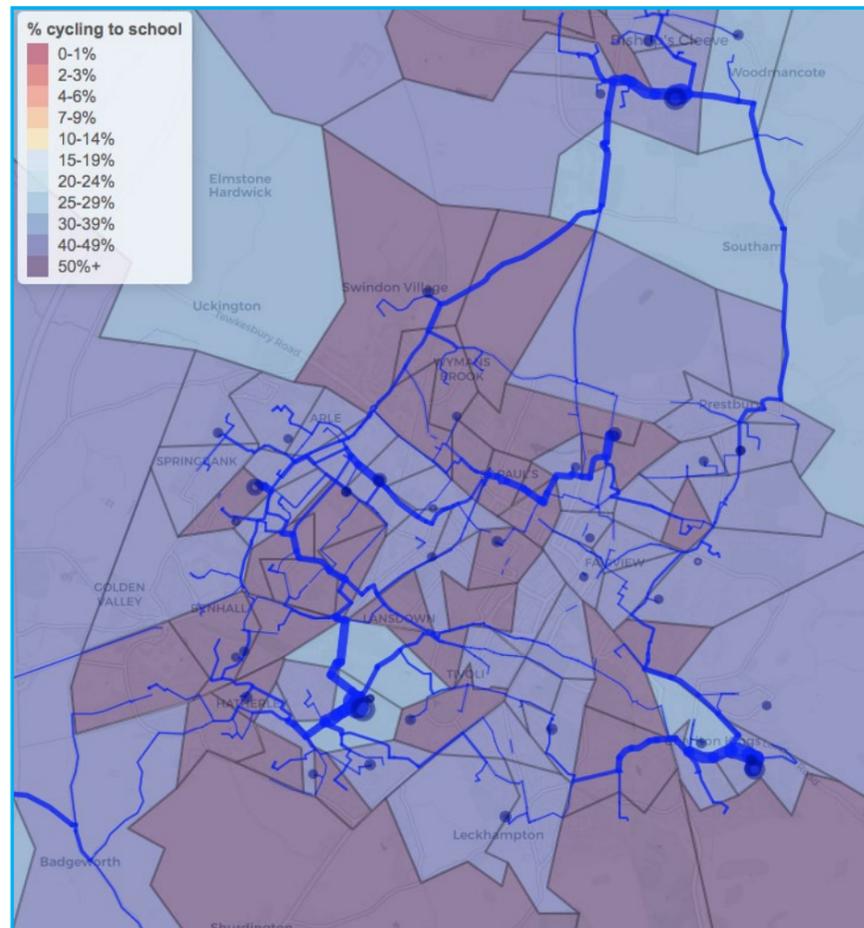
[National LTN 1/20 guidance](#) establishes an evidence-based set of design principles for creating routes that people use by ensuring they are:

- **Coherent:** Cycle networks should be planned and designed to allow people to reach their day to day destinations easily, along routes that connect, are simple to navigate and are of a consistently high quality.
- **Direct:** Cycle routes





Future potential to cycle in Cheltenham: Commuting



Future potential to cycle in Cheltenham: School trips

should be at least as direct – and preferably more direct – than those available for private motor vehicles.

- **Safe:** Cycle infrastructure must be perceived to be safe so that more people feel able to cycle.
- **Comfortable:** Good quality, well maintained, smooth surfaces, adequate width for the volume of users, minimal stopping and starting and avoiding steep gradients.
- **Attractive:** Cycle infrastructure should help to deliver public spaces that are well designed and finished in attractive materials and be places that people want to spend time using.

A hierarchy of infrastructure is required, physically protecting cyclists from high volume motor traffic and junctions, and on the stretches of road between them. The guidance also highlights that routes must be inclusive by design, and accessible to all users including families, older people and those with a disability. Many existing routes are compromised by dated barriers that make access impossible for cycles with child seats and trailers, adapted cycles and cargo bikes. Barriers on council owned land should be reviewed and upgraded to current accessibility standards to maximise the potential of existing infrastructure.

To be an effective choice for utility transport, cycles must be treated as vehicles and not pedestrians, being physically separated from them. **The road network is the cycle network** – which means that road space has to be re-allocated from cars to bikes.

High quality cycle parking must be available in urban centres, trip generator sites and securely in flats where people cannot store their bikes at home.

Challenges

Many major streets in Cheltenham do not have the space to maintain both the existing allocation of space to traffic, and also have segregated cycle ways. *The solution therefore has to be to implement a full range of measures aimed at reducing traffic.* As is planned for Oxford, once congestion is reduced, bus lanes no longer need to be separate – creating the space for segregated cycleways.

On other routes, there may be no alternative to making streets only one way for cars, but with segregated cycle ways in both directions.

Away from the major desire lines, cycle friendly streets depend on reducing speeds. Ideally the bulk of the residential and shopping streets should be 20mph, benefitting all road users, increasing capacity, and making it easier for pedestrians and cycles to move about.

First steps to make it happen

The council should commit to building a *signature cycle expressway*. The best route will emerge from detailed design and planning. But the objective is a *cross-town spine* that links sites with a high propensity to cycle (such as university campuses, and GCHQ) and also links the town centre and the railway station. This spine will then create a network effect when future cycleways link up to it.

More bicycles on protected bike lanes means fewer cars on the streets for those who still choose to drive, and less congestion – which helps make public transport cheaper and faster.



The new 'Sparrow' style crossing being introduced in Stockport is a signal controlled parallel crossing that keeps pedestrians and cyclists separate as they cross.



Even the busiest roads can be made safe for cyclists. This layout shows a CYCLOPS (Cycle Optimised Protected Signals) junction in Manchester.

Walking



Lets make Cheltenham walkable

A walkable town supports all the people walking already *and* entices more short distance trips to be walked by people who have a choice to motorise instead.

Walking is part of every trip and therefore there are benefits to the whole transport system when there is investment in walkability. However the additional measurable improvements to health and well being, social inclusion, equity, resilience, air quality and economic vitality that are also realised make it one of the core elements of any transport plan.

Vision

The borough council needs to include a commitment in the AQAP to:

- **Retain** the people walking already
- **Protect** people walking from ever getting hurt
- **Enable** people to walk by improving accessibility and comfort.

Policies for walkability

For policy to be effective at delivering the vision it needs to ensure:

- Transport decisions give priority to people walking

- Town planning is people centred
- Housing is connected to public transport
- Education sites, employment zones, health care centres, shops and green space is given clear, safe space for walking
- Design standards are set that are inclusive of age, gender and ability
- The impact of traffic and road safety is managed to minimise risk
- Road safety measures are enforced
- Walking is proactively promoted and celebrated at events and all relevant information channels
- Citizen satisfaction is the measure of impact and success.

A pledge to citizens

The borough council should pledge to citizens that people walking can expect:

- A dedicated, unobstructed and continuous space to walk that is of consistent quality, clean and maintained
- Safe road crossings with reasonable time given to cross and wait
- Seating and rest areas, lighting, ramps for gradients, shelter from the climate and green infrastructure to enhance comfort and enjoyment
- An experience that is secure from crime, safe from traffic and confident to navigate.

15 minute accessible neighbourhoods

This means delivering 15 minute accessible neighbourhoods by investing in safe, inclusive and attractive catchment access for 500m around transport hubs, education sites, retail areas, health care facilities, employment zones and sport and leisure amenities – the key places in every place where people always walk.

Where we need to improve walkability



For Cheltenham this means improving walkability at:

1. Cheltenham Spa train station (2.6 million people per year)
2. Royal Well bus station
3. The hospital
4. The 18 doctors surgeries
5. The 20 schools and 9 college buildings
6. The retail areas in every local neighbourhood
7. The 14 main parks and green spaces
8. Leisure @ Cheltenham sports centre
9. The Lido
10. The Race Course
11. The Football ground
12. Eagle Tower and the Insurance companies around the outside of town.

First steps to make it happen

Walk21 recommend an 8 step process that can be used to support the transition of a political commitment to the vision into visible benefits that citizens are grateful for improving the quality of their lives. This process has been successfully used in towns and cities around the world – most recently Nairobi, Hong Kong, Rotterdam, Tirana, Medellin, Kampala, and Dakar.

At the heart of the process is community engagement. Communities should have the opportunity to map their concerns with the existing walking experience so that authorities can respond and the impact can be quantified. (There is an accessible digital tool that can be used to do this.)

The borough council should also agree a signature project that temporarily and regularly reallocates existing road space to people walking as a celebration of 'car-free' lifestyles to help gain momentum for longer term and permanent changes. Examples might be:

- Suffolks market street openings in other areas of the town
- car-free town centre in race week, during festival events and when Cheltenham Town play at home etc.

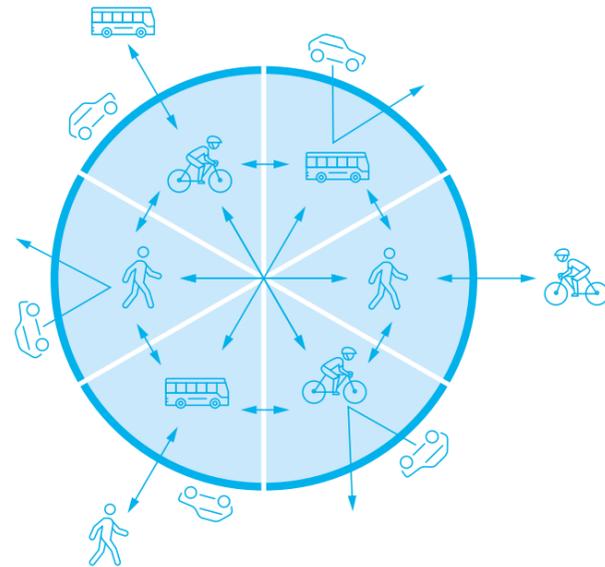


Transforming the town centre

The town centre should be transformed into a vibrant network of pedestrianised streets integrated with public services and cycling infrastructure. This should happen in parallel with the introduction of a town centre Clean Air/zero-emissions zone, and also a *traffic cells initiative*.

Traffic cells

More and more towns and cities are segmenting their central areas to restrict through trips by private vehicles. The graphic on the right illustrates the principle: cars cannot make direct crossings of the centre – but public transport, cyclists and pedestrians all flow easily through the centre.



Given the history of Boots Corner, this move needs careful planning. Centre stage has to be the vision of a new town centre which will allow residents to meet, relax and navigate easily without difficult road crossings.

The public health rationale must also be presented persuasively, followed by a genuine citizen engagement process.

Stakeholder groups such as taxi-drivers must have

any concerns addressed – and if necessary, new taxi ranks created in different areas of the town centre. Taxis may also need an exemption for a couple of years from the zero-emissions requirements brought in for the town centre.

The improvements to public transport, walkability and cycling infrastructure must also be evident at the same time that restrictions on cars crossing the centre are introduced.

Urban design for a 'livable' town

We need to dramatically reduce traffic in the town centre to reduce air pollution. Urban design is an important tool in supporting walking and cycling as the main ways of getting around.

New public squares, green spaces, and wide, level, traffic-free boulevards would all contribute to making Cheltenham an exceptionally 'livable' town.

We already have beautiful town centre parks – but there are also big opportunities to improve those parts of the town centre currently dominated by roads and traffic.

Given the Boots Corner history, we think that urban design based on the concept of 'shared space' might be particularly appropriate, rather than complete restrictions on private cars.

Two good examples of this in practice are from Poynton in Cheshire, and the transformation of New Road in Brighton. One year after New Road re-opened, pedestrian activity had risen 162% and cycling by 22% while traffic had fallen by 93%. Surveys of the old street had registered virtually no activity, whereas in 2008 a survey at 10am, 1pm, 4pm and 8pm, captured 500 staying activities. The safety audit stated 'motorists appear to behave as though they are intruders in the street; give almost total priority to pedestrians and most drive at the lowest possible speeds'.

Shared space transformation: Poynton, Cheshire



New Road, Brighton. In this redesign, a street audit was carried out, capturing how the street was currently used – which people visited and why, what features they valued, and how they used and moved around the

space. Extensive consultation was carried out with a wide range of residents and external partners. This informed everything from the positioning of street furniture to the choice of a 'shared space' treatment and materials.



Managing parking demand

All car journeys begin and end with parking.

And cars are inefficient in terms of the amount of space they take up – both on our roads and in car parks – and the number of people they move around. This is especially true when the driver is the sole occupant.

Therefore, managing demand for parking is a central means of managing demand for travel by private vehicle.

Policies for managing parking

- Commuter car parking should be limited in areas when they become well served by public transport – for example the town centre.
- On-street parking space should be prioritised for users with disabilities, cyclists, car clubs and other sustainable modes.
- Public transport and cycling provision should be prioritised over car parking provision.
- Parking should be restricted outside schools for air quality and road safety reasons.

Land use

A surprising amount of available land in towns and cities is taken up by parking. In large cities such as Birmingham, it can be up to 30%. Once we reduce over-reliance on travel by private transport, we reduce the need for parking spaces, and valuable land in short supply can be used in the most productive way possible.

We've given examples earlier of freeing up land for e-cargo hubs. Removing on-street parking on some major arteries could also free up space for better cycleways. Land currently used for some of the 16 town centre car parks could be used for building new homes or commercial developments or opened up as new, green public spaces.

Parking costs

The council should work with partners and public transport providers to manage the link between the level of parking cost and public transport fares. This is to ensure that using public transport is a more competitive and attractive mode of transport in comparison to lower occupancy private cars.

The introduction of a Workplace Parking Levy (see also the *Green Bus Revolution* section) is a critical element of managing parking demand, and income from this will be ring-fenced for specific public transport projects.

Increased charges from town centre parking and workplace parking will be used to subsidise parking at all park and ride locations on the outskirts of the town.

School Streets

The council should insist that GCC implement School Streets measures at all schools in Cheltenham in order to restrict car speed and access, manage parking around school locations and to encourage active travel for pupils.

Sources of funding

Workplace Parking Levy

Nottingham pioneered the Workplace Parking Levy (WPL) some 10 years ago. It has been hailed as a huge success, allowing the city to invest in an impressive sustainable transport infrastructure. The scheme is also setting the scene for Nottingham to become the UK's first net zero city.

Lecicester, Hounslow, Oxford, Edinburgh, Glasgow, are all about to launch a similar scheme, and many other towns are at the consultation stage.

Nottingham currently set the levy at £428/place for employers who provide more than 11 places. The scheme has raised *more than £75m* for the council so far. All revenue should be ring-fenced to be spent on locally-identified transport improvements. This is the biggest source of funding available to CBC. And it is directly under its control.

For this reason, an urgent initial study needs to be carried out to establish the likely amount that could be raised. Although businesses would understandably be reluctant to pay, there is strong evidence from Nottingham that the benefits to local business of reducing congestion outweigh the costs of the levy.

ZEBRA scheme

ZEBRA (Zero Emission Buses Regional Area) is a UK government scheme to encourage the switch to all electric bus fleets. Successful bids will receive 75% of the price difference between a diesel bus and an electric bus, and also 75% of the cost of charging infrastructure.

Selling council owned car parks

Re-purposing some of the existing 16 car parks is important to help transform the town centre and reduce 'demand' for private motor travel. Depending on which car parks are repurposed in which way, there will be a capital surplus to fund some other aspects of the AQAP.

DEFRA Air Quality grants

This is an annual round of funding to help local authorities deliver projects to improve air quality.

Ring fencing of a proportionate part of GCC's Transport budget

Cheltenham Borough Council should argue for GCC to delegate a proportionate amount of the Transport budget for those aspects of the AQAP which will have most impact on air pollution and carbon emissions. This may be resisted by GCC... but CBC should take the case to the DEFRA Secretary of State under air quality legislation, if agreement can't be reached.

There is now a clearly established business case and return on investment for encouraging walking and cycling through a mix of strategic infrastructure and local neighbourhood changes, [summarised by Transport for London](#), drawing on a range of evidence from across the world.

Future government funds that may be available

The government has previously made available significant capital funding in schemes such as the Transforming Cities Fund (£2.5 billion), Clean Air Fund, the Ultra Low Emission Bus scheme, and Future Transport Zones Fund (£90 million).

Although these schemes are currently closed, the government is committed to investing in infrastructure projects, and other opportunities will undoubtedly arise in the future. An example is the new national bus strategy announced in March this year, backed by £3bn of investment.

Local authorities were also able to bid for an [E-Cargo Bike Grant Fund](#) recently.

Given the government's emphasis on encouraging sustainable transport and tackling air pollution (see the Decarbonising Transport, Gear Change, and Bus Back Better strategy documents for example), there will undoubtedly be a stream of new funding initiatives in the near future.

Successful bidders will be *those local authorities that already have worked up plans*. Those that have been created with high levels of citizen engagement will be at the front of the queue.



www.cleanaircheltenham.org