

Sustrans Cymru 2021  
Manifesto

# Tomorrow's Wales, for Everyone.



Y MUNWCH Â'R MUDIAD  
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# Foreword



Sustrans Cymru's vision for Tomorrow's Wales has never been more relevant. Imagine a society in which everyone is able to walk or cycle in their neighbourhoods. Schools, shops and workplaces are within easy reach, and our towns are accessible, green and vibrant.



**Christine Boston**  
Sustrans Cymru Director

Communities and settlements are connected by quality off-road walking and cycling links and public transport is accessible, reliable and affordable for all.

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit and Wales went into lockdown, we were asked to stay at home, avoid public transport and only make essential journeys. This highlighted how important good connections within our communities are and how much we rely on easy access to essential shops and services - things we previously took for granted.

Cars disappeared from our roads overnight and where they could, people walked and cycled short journeys. Authorities around Wales delivered a roll-out of protected cycle lanes to create safe space for those who wanted to travel by bike and where possible, pavements were widened to ensure more space for pedestrians. Green space was revalued as essential for people's health and wellbeing, and time spent in nature was recognised as boosting immunity and improving mental health.

However, whilst we saw many people adapt their living, working and travel patterns in a way that would have previously been unimaginable, many others were disproportionately impacted by this crisis. This comes within the context of Wales already facing a multitude of other challenges - the climate and ecological emergency, rising levels of poverty and ill-health. These issues often have the greatest impact on the most vulnerable in our society.

We want to see a world where people are connected via sustainable transport and active travel, and where not having a car does not affect your ability to be included in society.

This is why we call on the next Welsh Government to deliver ambitious leadership to ensure a sustainable recovery that is fair for all people in Wales. There is a unique opportunity to focus on walking, cycling and public transport services that serve all users equitably, creating a world-class legacy for future generations and delivering Tomorrow's Wales, for Everyone.



# Summary

**Ask 1:** Dedicate at least 10% of the total transport budget for active travel, including provision for local authorities to be equipped to deliver on the Active Travel Act and a revenue funding stream for behaviour change.

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**Ask 2:** Create a separate capital fund of £20m each year for the development and improvement of the National Cycle Network (NCN) to ensure it is fully accessible for everyone.

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**Ask 3:** Ensure every child in Wales has access to a cycle, and free cycle training.

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**Ask 4:** Set up a programme for School Streets embedded within neighbourhoods that enable children to independently travel to and from school.



**Ask 5:** Help local authorities create towns and cities that put people first by making 20-minute neighbourhoods a central principle in local planning, transport, health and economic policy.

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**Ask 6:** Apply the sustainable transport hierarchy to all transport and planning policy and investment decisions to ensure Wales prioritises people and their access services, while reducing car dependency.

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**Ask 7:** Prioritise sustainable transport options by fully integrating walking, cycling with the wider public transport network, ensuring it serves all users equitably.

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**Ask 8:** Ensure 20mph speed limits are implemented by 2023 as the default speed limit in all built up areas and pavement parking is banned across Wales.

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**Ask 9:** Legislate for a Clean Air Act within the first term of office.





**Ask 10:** Establish a National Greenways Programme to provide better access to nature for everyone across Wales.

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**Ask 11:** Improve the diversity of representation on the Active Travel Board and raise the status of the Board to a Commission that is able to hold the Welsh Government to account.

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**Ask 12:** Set challenging targets for active travel and conduct an annual high-quality National Transport Survey to evaluate success.



# Investing in safe and healthy travel



With recurring lockdowns, walking and cycling came to play a key role in people's lives, either as their form of daily exercise, or as a form of transport.

It became clear that with lower levels of traffic on our roads, people feel much more confident to walk and cycle around, and between, their neighbourhoods, towns and cities.

The government response to the sudden increase in people walking and cycling during the initial lockdown should be a springboard to shape the way we move and live from now on. Active travel will have a key role to play in getting towns and cities moving safely at different stages of the recovery from the current crisis and beyond.

We call on the next Welsh Government to lock in the changes we have seen in people's walking and cycling behaviour by further investing in active travel, ensuring better integration of the National Cycle Network (NCN) to improve connectivity between towns. This requires a dedicated funding stream to support those people and groups who might be less confident in changing their behaviour.

The NCN should also be enhanced to ensure it is accessible for everyone, including people with pushchairs, wheelchairs or adapted cycles.

**Ask 1:** Dedicate at least 10% of the total transport budget for active travel, including provision for local authorities to be equipped to deliver on the Active Travel Act and a revenue funding stream for behaviour change.

**Ask 2:** Create a separate capital fund of £20m each year for the development and improvement of the National Cycle Network to ensure it is fully accessible for everyone.



# Inspiring future generations to walk and cycle

The evidence is clear; closing roads to cars to create space for walking, cycling or street play benefits people's health and safety. This means that the places where children gather on their journey to school can, and should, be made safer and cleaner.

Unfortunately, with children's return to school at the start of the new term in September, we saw the return of busy drop off and pick up times, with congestion and idling challenging the safety and cleanliness of our neighbourhoods and impacting on the health of our children.

Sustrans Cymru want to see streets around schools transformed and children's learning supported so that all children are able to walk, cycle or scoot to school safely. Children should get the chance to own a bicycle, learn how to ride it and have the opportunity to use it safely on their way to and from school.

Removing congestion from roads outside schools will create safer streets, keep children's lungs safe from harmful air pollution, as well as help incorporate exercise into their daily routine. School Streets measures – closing streets around schools at drop off and pick-up times - not only allow this, they can also lower the pressure on shared school transport such as school buses.

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**Ask 3:** Ensure every child in Wales has access to a cycle, and free cycle training.

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**Ask 4:** Set up a programme for School Streets embedded within neighbourhoods that enable children to independently travel to and from school.



# Create a Wales of 20-minute neighbourhoods



We define a 20-minute neighbourhood as one that allows residents to meet most of their needs within a 20 minute round trip by foot.

The way in which we have built housing developments over the last decade has been focussed on the wants and needs of the car, at the expense of providing the local jobs and services that a community needs to thrive.

The different lockdowns in 2020 forced us to reorganise our lives much closer to home. This drastic and sudden change in the way we live, work and travel brought into the spotlight the importance of having certain things like food retail, education, health services and green space in close proximity of our homes. It also highlighted that not everyone has equal access to those things, particularly when private cars are taken out of the equation.

A 20-minute neighbourhood approach should help to disperse investment, jobs and services more widely across a town or city rather than just focusing on the centre. This would help to create local jobs and services, and should prioritise areas that are currently poorly served or connected.

We are calling on the next Welsh Government to ensure people are put first in future investment and policy decisions. This should be reflected in the way we build new homes, plan new infrastructure and organise our economy.

The concept of 20-minute neighbourhoods should be used to better align spatial planning (i.e. what is in an area) with transport planning (transport infrastructure provision), to deliver a mix of uses and incentivise people to walk. New home builders should be required to finish all the transport infrastructure at the beginning of the project, so that sustainability it is plumbed in from day one.

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**Ask 5:** Help local authorities create towns and cities that put people first by making 20-minute neighbourhoods a central principle in local planning, transport, health and economic policy.

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**Ask 6:** Apply the sustainable transport hierarchy to all transport and planning policy and investment decisions to ensure Wales prioritises people and their access services, while reducing car dependency.





# Transport for everyone

The health and economic impacts of the pandemic have both disproportionately affected ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and people on lower income levels. These are the same people who already suffer disproportionately from air pollution, the effects of climate change, poor access to green space and sustainable transport options.

Sustrans Cymru want to see the next Welsh Government give everyone a more equitable chance to recover from this crisis. This is an opportunity for doing things differently and prepare for a future where all people have access to what they need to live well and thrive.

This is why we want to see access to sustainable infrastructure being prioritised and legislation to improve the quality of our air and health being created.

Integrating public transport and active travel effectively should also enable people to travel the first and last mile of their journey by cycle or by foot.

The next Welsh Government should also make the road environment less intimidating and provide high quality infrastructure for walking and cycling, so that all types of users feel safe and comfortable, not just the most confident ones. This should include limiting the speed limits in built up areas to 20mph and make our streets free of clutter by banning pavement parking.

**Ask 7:** Prioritise sustainable transport options by fully integrating walking, cycling with the wider public transport network, ensuring it serves all users equitably.

**Ask 8:** Ensure 20mph speed limits are implemented by 2023 as the default speed limit in all built up areas and pavement parking is banned across Wales.

**Ask 9:** Legislate for a Clean Air Act within the first term of office.





# Access to nature

Evidence has long suggested that the access we have to green space is closely linked to our physical and mental wellbeing, and that poor access widens the gap in health outcomes between rich and poor. COVID and the repeated lockdowns have brought the value of having quality natural spaces nearby to everyone's personal attention, but also how disparate and unequal this access is from one citizen to another.

Being able to take a quick walk from the front door to reset, or easily take the children out for a bike ride after school turns out to be much easier for some people than others. Research has shown that only 57% of adults in Great Britain live within five minutes' walk of green space, and this figure drops even lower for people on lower incomes or ethnic minority groups.

We need to create an environment where every person in Wales is guaranteed to have access to green space of a high quality within walking distance.

**Ask 10:** Establish a National Greenways Programme to provide better access to nature for everyone across Wales.

This should be delivered in partnership and should aim to:

- Expand green corridors within and between our towns and cities such as National Cycle Network routes,
- Improve access to quality green and blue space in urban areas through measures such as repurposing derelict sites and buildings, planting trees and providing seating along rivers. This would ensure no one in Wales is more than a 20-minute return walk away from the great outdoors,
- Encourage measures increasing biodiversity through planning policy, including Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems.





# Delivering success

During this Assembly term, the number of children and adults travelling actively has steadied after a fall earlier in the decade.

Sustrans call on the next Welsh Government to show bold leadership to ensure this change in people's behaviour is harnessed as we come out of this crisis, and the delivery of policy reflects ambition.

In order to deliver on Sustrans Cymru's vision and creating **Tomorrow's Wales, for Everyone**, we are calling on the next Welsh Government not only to raise the Active Travel Board's status to a well-resourced Commission to hold them accountable. We also expect the Government to improve the diversity of representation on the board, ensuring accountability goes through the lens of equity for all types of users.

Finally, the recommendations of the Active Travel Act review should be implemented as a priority. The setting of ambitious targets for modal shift, as well as an annual high-quality National Transport Survey should be used to evaluate success.

**Ask 11:** Improve the diversity of representation on the Active Travel Board and raise the status of the Board to a Commission that is able to hold the Welsh Government to account.

**Ask 12:** Set challenging targets for active travel and conduct an annual high-quality National Transport Survey to evaluate success.



During the first lockdown in spring 2020, **57%** of Welsh people picked walking as their favourite and most accessible way to stay active.

# About Sustrans

Sustrans is the charity making it easier for people to walk and cycle.

We are engineers and educators, experts and advocates. We connect people and places, create liveable neighbourhoods, transform the school run and deliver a happier, healthier commute.

Sustrans works in partnership, bringing people together to find the right solutions. We make the case for walking and cycling by using robust evidence and showing what can be done.

We are grounded in communities and believe that grassroots support combined with political leadership drives real change, fast.

Join us on our journey. [www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)

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## Get in touch

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