

A close-up photograph of a yellow bicycle. The frame features a red strawberry decal. A person wearing black and white sneakers is standing next to the bike, with their legs and feet partially visible.

# West Midlands Cycling Charter



West  
Midlands  
Cycle



Transport for  
West Midlands

## Vision

Our vision is to realise the full potential of cycling's contribution to the health and wealth of the West Midlands – creating more sustainable suburbs, towns and cities that are healthier, safer and more desirable places to live, work and learn. Addressing the safety concerns of existing and potential cyclists has been fundamental to increasing cycling everywhere.

We want to raise levels of cycling across the West Midlands Metropolitan area to 5% of all trips by 2023. This represents a 400% increase in cycling journeys from the 1% baseline.

This ten-year target is not the end of a journey but a start – to where we see the West Midlands where cycling is naturally commonplace. By 2033, we want to raise cycling to 10% of all trips.

## Why do we need a cycling charter?

West Midlands cycling levels are currently significantly below those of many other metropolitan areas and core cities across the UK. The successes these areas have had has not been by chance, but due to a clear and defined ambition to raise cycling levels, and commitment and will to deliver this change. Addressing the safety concerns of existing and potential cyclists has been fundamental to increasing cycling elsewhere.

**Cycling has an important role to play in addressing the challenges the West Midlands face, which include reducing congestion, carbon and pollution, supporting economic growth and employment, tackling obesity and creating places where people want to live, work, learn, shop and do business.**

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Cycling plays a key role in developing a high quality sustainable mobility system that meets the travel needs of local businesses and communities – connecting people to opportunities and improving choice, convenience, affordability, safety and connectivity across the West Midlands for all citizens.

The popularity of cycling continues to grow, with more people taking up cycling for getting to work, staying healthy and for leisure activities. We need to make the most of the benefits cycling offers the West Midlands, and capitalise on the current cycling 'renaissance'.





As part of an integrated transport system, cycling can:

- Support economic growth and the delivery of Strategic Economic Plans by reducing congestion and delays on our road network.
- Improve the environment by helping to reduce carbon emissions, air pollution and noise.
- Offer an affordable, convenient and low cost travel option to access jobs, education and leisure opportunities, particularly for people without access to cars.
- Increase people's physical activity levels, tackle health inequalities and improve both the physical and mental health of West Midlands residents.
- Create better places to live by making it easy for people to move around their local communities.

There is widespread evidence that encouraging more people to walk and cycle makes sense – cycling can help to make the West Midlands a happier, healthier and wealthier place to live, improving the quality of life for all residents.

The potential to enable more people of all ages and backgrounds to cycle is there, particularly for short trips – be it travelling to work, school, and to local shops or for fun leisure days out. This has been demonstrated by projects such as Bike North Birmingham, where targeted investment in improving cycle facilities and supporting more people to try cycling is delivering results above the current 1% level of cycling across the West Midlands.

However for the West Midlands to fully realise the potential of cycling, a fundamental cultural shift is required in how we lead, plan, promote and fund cycling in the region. This cultural shift has started, as evidenced by the Cycle Coventry initiative and Birmingham's recent successful Cycle City Ambition funding award.

**“** The ambition to increase cycling levels to 5% of all journeys will provide the critical ‘tipping point’ that enables cycling to change from being perceived as a marginal travel choice to one that becomes an everyday attractive option for journeys to work, school and leisure. **”**

Safety concerns are the number one concern cited many people as the reason why they do not cycle. The perceptions and the reality of sharing the road with cars, lorries and buses deters many from cycling. It is crucial that this Charter addresses these concerns and makes cycling an attractive and viable option.

This Cycling Charter aims to grow cycling in the West Midlands by making it easier and safer for more people to cycle. The Charter outlines the key principles that will enable the region to deliver a step change in cycling. From this Charter, a detailed action plan will be developed to deliver the vision of increasing cycling by 400% in the next ten years.

## Charter

This Charter outlines the key principles that all partners will adopt to deliver the required step change in cycling across the West Midlands Metropolitan area. It represents a shared vision and approach that will increase cycling levels across the West Midlands.

## Leadership and Profile

Effective and high profile leadership on cycling has acted as a catalyst for change in places such as London and Bristol, and will be the key to delivering an increase in cycling across the West Midlands.

1. A high-profile local cycling champion will spearhead an increase in cycling across the West Midlands. They will act as the spokesperson for the Cycling Charter and will also be an inspirational figure to encourage more people to take up cycling.
2. Committed leadership and political will across all levels will be required to deliver a step change in cycling in the Black Country, Birmingham & Solihull and Coventry – enabled by cross-party and Local Enterprise Partnership support and investment in cycling. This leadership responsibility will need to be incorporated and embedded into current governance changes across the West Midlands.
3. Leadership at all levels – to deliver our cycle vision, cycling champions at local level, including those in the health sector, business community and voluntary sector, will be supported to nurture change at a local level and build community participation in cycling.

## Cycling Network

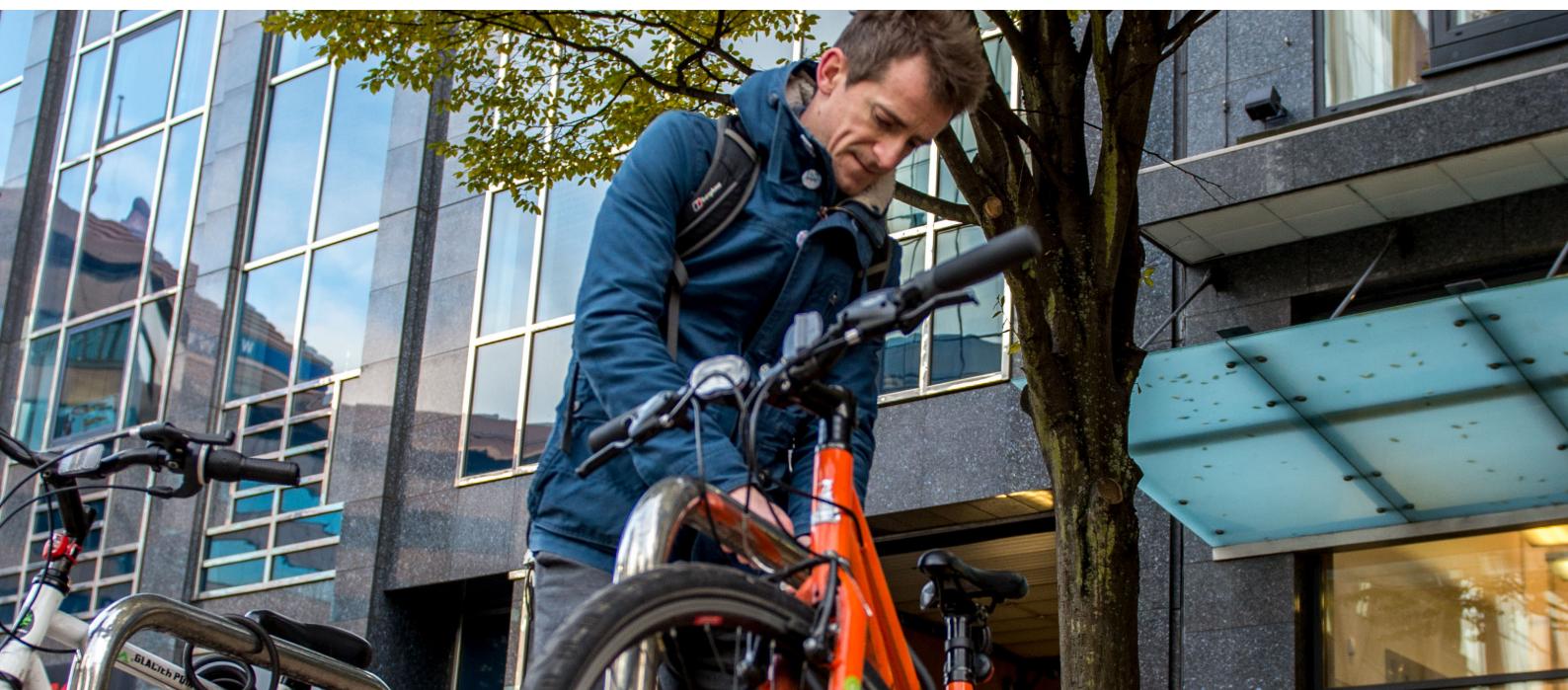
We need significant changes in the planning, design and maintenance of the West Midlands transport network if we are to increase cycling levels.

1. A high quality and coherent cycle network across the West Midlands for commuting and local trips that meets the needs of all levels of cyclists. This will apply an integrated approach to design that references European best practice. Design will support ease of movement for cyclists (and pedestrians) through enhanced connections that offer advantages over car journeys and helps to link up neighbourhoods.

The cycle network will enable existing and potential cyclists to have confidence that wherever they cycle in the West Midlands, be it in Wolverhampton or Walsgrave, they will experience a high quality and consistent cycle ‘offer’ of routes, signage and cycle parking. By 2023, we aim to make all journeys possible with Bikeability Level 2 training.

We will deliver a high quality cycle network across the West Midlands, recognisable to all, supported by consistent, clear route branding, signage and wayfinding, cycle parking, mapping and online journey planning.

2. The needs of all road users, including cyclists, are considered from the outset in the designing of all new and upgraded road improvements across the network – avoiding expensive retrofitting. A key principle of the transport network is to make the most of existing connections as efficiently as possible, ensuring the movement of as many people as possible in the most sustainable and safest way.





**The needs of all road users including freight, car drivers, bus users, pedestrians road users including freight, car drivers, bus users, pedestrians and cyclists will be considered to ensure a balanced approach, but with cyclists given a higher priority than in the past, utilising the User Hierarchy as a guiding principle.**

Cyclists will be consulted and actively engaged with to ensure any new proposals are fit for purpose, whether it be on or off road routes, including canals and open spaces. Cycling groups will be actively encouraged to support the auditing of existing routes to ensure they meet their needs, and that routes are improved to join up the cycle network around the West Midlands.

This will be reinforced by the provision of secure cycle parking. We will also ensure that opportunities to improve cycle provision within routine maintenance programmes are identified and delivered.

3. Through the Planning Process, we will ensure developers cater for the needs of cyclists in the planning and construction of all new housing estates, schools and hospitals, business parks and industrial estates, and leisure and retail sites. High quality cycle access should be standard in all new

developments, along with the provision of sufficient numbers of well located and secure cycle parking facilities. Where new developments are located along or near existing canal and cycle networks, access needs to be integrated to achieve a high quality urban environment. This principle supports existing commitments such as the Black Country Joint Core Strategy.

4. Cycling will be better integrated with public transport to provide 'door-to-door' travel choices across the region – enabling people to easily move from bikes to buses, trains or trams depending on their journey needs. Cycling offers huge potential to replace short car trips and relieve local congestion, but also has an important role to play as part of people's longer journeys when combined with public transport. Cycling options need to be fully integrated into public transport journey planning and smartcard ticketing.

5. The promotion and encouragement of an extension of 20mph speed zones where appropriate in urban areas. Speed limits will be supported by self-enforcing measures including signs and driver awareness campaigns. Routes requiring higher speed limits will be supported by alternative cycling provision to provide cyclists with a safer option.

## Promoting and encouraging cycling

The co-ordinated, effective and efficient delivery of cycle training, safety and marketing will play a significant role in increasing cycling across the West Midlands.

1. Affordable (and free where possible) cycle training available to all adults and children, to equip the people of the West Midlands with the skills and confidence to cycle for commuting, leisure and education purposes.

This will build on existing ‘Bikeability’ training and local authority sports and leisure programmes. It will be enhanced by a tailored programme to engage with local communities, schools and businesses to enable more people to travel by bike. Holistic programmes of smarter choices support (including bike maintenance, led rides, cycling events and incentives, journey planning and cycle hire/loan) will embed a culture of cycling at ground level.

Working with the third sector and social enterprise organisations, we will also support those local communities who traditionally cycle less, and ensure access to affordable bikes for people who may be unable to meet the upfront cost of buying a bike.

2. Safely sharing our roads. We will work with the freight industry and bus operators, helping all drivers through improved training and cycle awareness. This will be supported by road safety and speed awareness programmes for lorry, bus and car drivers to maximise the potential for safely sharing the roads.

3. An integrated marketing approach to increasing cycling across the region. This will build upon the existing Network West Midlands mobility communications and Smarter Choices activities. This will consist of common branding, promotional material and online resources, localised where appropriate. It will deliver campaigns that sell the benefits of cycling to a range of target audiences, building on the existing understanding of ‘near market’ cyclists gained through the Smart Network, Smarter Choices segmentation approach. A range of tailored cycling support will be provided to enable more people to start (and stay) cycling.

## Funding

Funding for cycling improvements will be crucial if we are to meet our aspirations for cycling growth in the West Midlands.

Other urban areas in the UK are investing in cycling now. The All Party Parliamentary Cycling Group (APPCG) has recommended a spend of at least £10 per person per year, rising to £20, across the country, and the Cycle City Ambition bid guidance also recommended a spend of £10 per person per annum.

It is estimated that average cycling spend per head in the West Midlands is currently circa 25 pence per head – raising this to £10 per head will support the transformational change required to deliver this Charter’s ambitions. For example, Cycle Coventry and Birmingham are now investing more in cycling, successfully levering in external funding to deliver their cycling programmes. In the current public sector funding climate, we need to be innovative and work in partnership with other organisations to lever in funding for Cycling across the region.

1. Funding and resources will be secured over the next ten years to give certainty and the ability to forward plan to achieve our ambitious cycling target. This will include identifying and sharing of partner resources and expertise to get maximum value. We will identify how highway maintenance programmes can offer opportunities for improving cycle infrastructure. We will also identify additional sources of funding, including the EU and central government, private sector contributions and the role of the third sector and social enterprises, along with the health, education and sport sectors.

2. Funding will be sought to deliver a high quality strategic cycle network across the region. Cycling will receive a ‘fair share of the pot’ – we will strive to achieve a spend in line with the APPCG recommendations of £10 to £20 per person invested in improving cycling facilities locally, and supporting more people from across the West Midlands to cycle.

3. Co-ordination of resources and expertise from a range of partners (including the voluntary, private and public sector) to maximise the potential for delivering an increase in cycling.

**“ The positive benefits of investing in cycling in the West Midlands are clear. Increased levels of cycling will benefit our economy, our environment and our health. ”**



## NEXT STEPS

A detailed action plan will be developed to support this Charter, and ensure delivery of the 5% target of all trips in the West Midlands to be made by bike by 2023.

This will include the establishment of robust governance, accountability, delivery and monitoring arrangements to ensure the cycling vision for the West Midlands is realised, including milestones against which progress can be clearly measured.

Thanks to all our partners:

