

# **Active travel in Edinburgh generates millions in economic benefits while saving on emissions**

**Bike Life is the walking and cycling index produced by Sustrans and the newest edition is out today. The latest report shows that around 66% of Edinburgh residents walk at least five days a week which is higher than the national average of 50%.**

Around a quarter of those living in Edinburgh cycle at least once a week. Each year people who walk, wheel or cycle help to take 150,000 cars off the road, saving the NHS more than £8.2 million through associated benefits to health.

But around 70,7 million journeys of up to three miles are still made by car, and 78% of those who responded to the survey said they would walk if they had more shops or other services close to home. This will be possible if the council's plans for a network of 20 minute neighbourhoods is put in place.

[Read the full report here.](#)

Around a quarter of people living in the capital do not cycle

but would like to and most said that more segregated cycle lanes would help them to use a bike. They also said that secure bike storage would help.

Several major cycling infrastructure projects are already being constructed or planned in Edinburgh, including the [City Centre West to East Link \(CCWEL\)](#) and the [transformation of George Street](#). The council has also installed 106 [secure cycle parking hangars](#) during the last two years, with a total of 180 hangars to be installed as part of the programme's initial phase. The number of people on the waiting list for cycle hangars is however growing as there is no more agreed funding at present.

When the council last discussed the possibility of more storage units last year a report from the Director of Place Paul Lawrence stated that: "Cyclehoop Ltd were awarded the contract to supply, install, manage and maintain 180 units at a contract value of £576,000. The cost of providing the additional units would be £351,000 for each of the next two financial years."



Cllr Karen Doran at the "opening" of the first cycle storage by the Meadows in August 2020 PHOTO ©2021 The Edinburgh Reporter

Daisy Narayanan, Head of Placemaking and Mobility at the City of Edinburgh Council, said: "As ever, this report provides a fascinating snapshot of people's walking, wheeling, and cycling habits – and the immense benefits active travel can bring, not only to our own health but the environment, the economy and the quality of life here.

"Transport currently accounts for just under a third of Edinburgh's emissions and it's clear that there's an urgent need to aid and encourage more sustainable ways of travelling if we're to meet our 2030 net zero target. Responses to the Walking and Cycling Index provide an excellent guide for the

kind of changes we need to make – people are telling us what we need to do to help them to travel by foot, wheel or bike, particularly for shorter journeys.

“Thankfully, there’s already a great deal of work underway to support this. Our strategy for 20-minute neighbourhoods will mean people across Edinburgh can live well locally, meeting most of their daily needs from within their own community. The approach is designed to improve access to services where it is most convenient and helps to support local businesses, creating thriving, vibrant town and local centres.

“This is alongside investment of £108 million over the next few years to transform walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure across the Capital, as outlined in our ambitious City Mobility Plan, including the transformation of George Street, the delivery of CCWEL linking Roseburn to Leith Walk and the Meadows to George Street route.”



Transport Convener Lesley Macinnes with Active Travel Minister, Patrick Harvie breaking ground at City Centre West

to East Link (CCWEL) in Roseburn with Karen McGregor Portfolio Director for Sustrans and pupils from Roseburn Primary School L-R Maheer Zahir (10), Isla Kinnear (10) Molly Jamieson (11) and Sadie Walsh (11) PHOTO ©The Edinburgh Reporter

Dr Sam Gardner, Chair of Edinburgh's Climate Commission, said: "Improving our streets to encourage more people to choose active ways of travelling is not only an essential part of tackling climate change but will also create a healthier, fairer city.

"A planned investment programme is already in place to support a step-change in the city's cycling network and improve the safety of our streets for those walking and wheeling. It's crucial that we not only deliver this programme but that we continue to build on its ambition at every opportunity.

"Edinburgh is a beautiful, compact and walkable city. We want to make sure all members of society can gain from this, and the Walking and Cycling Index is a key resource to help us to achieve that."

Stewart Carruth, Interim Director, Sustrans Scotland, said: "I'd like to thank the people of Edinburgh who gave us their time to take part in the Walking and Cycling Index. Walking and wheeling should be the most accessible and desirable form of transport. It is of huge importance to people, especially during the current cost of living crisis and the climate emergency.

"The evidence is clear – Edinburgh residents want the option to walk and wheel to where they need to get to, and don't want outdated and unmaintained pavements, crossing points that make walking and wheeling unsafe or inaccessible, and vehicles parked on pavements getting in their way. The City of Edinburgh Council can rest assured that they have the backing of the public to build on the work they have already started to make it easier for people to walk, wheel and cycle to get around."



BEST Lanark Road cycle protest aiming to persuade the council to retain the segregated cycle lanes installed under Spaces for People. PHOTO © 2021, Martin P. McAdam [www.martinmcadam.com](http://www.martinmcadam.com)