

Edinburgh Napier academic explains health and environmental benefits of active travel in report to World Health Organization

Dr Adrian Davis Professor of Transport and Health at Edinburgh Napier University has co-authored a report for the World Health Organization explaining that cycling for just one day a week rather than driving saves the equivalent emissions of a flight from London to New York.

In the report he provides evidence on the benefits and the risks of active travel, showing that promoting active travel is “good for population health and the environment”. He expands on the benefits of e-bikes which have meant that more people take up cycling – including older people who find there is a positive impact on health and wellbeing.

The 2020s promise to be pivotal for urban mobility. While electric car models compete for the limelight in television commercials, active travel modes, such as walking and cycling, more quietly contribute their part to the transport

revolution.

Foreword to report

As an example the report states that if just one in five residents can be convinced to permanently swap the driving seat for the saddle one day a week, it would cut emissions from all car travel in Europe by about 8%.

The health benefits of active travel are also laid bare with the report showing that active travellers have as much as a 40% lower risk of dying from cancer and a 52% lower risk of dying from heart disease compared to those commuting by car or public transport. They also have a 46% lower risk of developing heart disease and a 45% lower risk of developing cancer at all. This means a poorer quality of life.

Minister for Active Travel, Patrick Harvie, said: "I'm pleased to welcome this new report from the World Health Organisation on the many benefits of active travel.

"This peer-reviewed publication – co-authored by Dr Davis from Edinburgh Napier University – provides the latest evidence base for policy makers across the globe on why investment in walking, wheeling and cycling is so important for our health, our cities and our environment.

"The vital role active travel can play in building healthier and happier lives is well recognised in Scotland. That's why I'm proud the Scottish Government has committed to spend at least 10% of the transport budget on active travel by 2024/25, enabling a transformational investment in communities across the country. This report sets out all the benefits that we will see as we make that shift."

Co-author [Dr Adrian Davis](#) said: "This report clearly shows that for individuals and societies active travel is good for health and that we can all play our part in tackling climate

change. As Individuals, we can take actions which benefits our own health and that of others.

“People who walk or cycle as well as use cars have lower carbon footprints from all daily travel. More people switching some of their journeys to active travel would lower carbon emissions from transport on a daily basis.

“The report provides timely evidence to support policy makers and practitioners, coming as it does shortly after the Scottish local government elections.”




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Professor Adrian Davis outside the Scottish Parliament with his Transport Policy Paper. Neil Hanna Photography