

Lift Off for Cycling

The headline results

Results from the first three years of the Cycling Demonstration Towns programme show that it has been a major success, with all six towns achieving their aim of getting more people cycling, more safely, more often. The evidence shows that investing in cycling is a highly cost-effective way of achieving transport, health and social objectives, with benefits at least three times the costs.

A comprehensive evaluation of the investment in the six Cycling Demonstration Towns (Aylesbury, Brighton & Hove, Darlington, Derby, Exeter and Lancaster with Morecambe) has shown:

1. Increasing trips by bike

For the first time in the UK outside London, the national trend of a gradual decline in cycling levels has been reversed. The average increase in cycling across all six towns was 27% between 2005 and 2009¹.

2. More people cycling

The proportion of adults doing any cycling increased by 14% between 2006 and 2009. This means that the recorded increase is the result of more people starting to cycle, or returning to cycling again, not just the result of cyclists using their bikes for more trips².

3. Cycling to school has more than doubled where towns invested most in children

In schools that benefited from Bikeability training, more cycle parking facilities, and a Bike It Officer, the proportion of pupils who cycled to school on a regular basis increased considerably. In schools involved in the Bike It programme the proportion of pupils who cycled to school on a regular basis – either every day or at least once or twice a week – increased by 126%³.



4. A healthier population: Cycling investment generates town-wide increases in physical activity

The increase in cycling did not just occur among those already physically active. Survey data showed a decrease in the proportion of people in the towns classed as physically inactive: the group most at risk of premature death⁴.

5. These results were not found in comparable towns

The increase in cycling activity for either occasional or regular cyclists in the Cycling Demonstration Towns is not observed in local authorities of a similar size and nature. Nor is the increase in cycling in the Cycling Demonstration Towns because of any general trend of growth in cycling in medium-sized urban areas⁵.

6. This growth matches the growth of cycling in London

Cycling levels grew by 107% in London between 2001 and 2009. The growth rate in cycling levels for the Cycling Demonstration Towns matches growth rates in London, and also other international cities which have demonstrated sustained long-term commitment to cycling⁶.

7. Investment pays back at least 3:1

Using data from this programme, appraisal carried out by the Department for Transport shows that the benefit to cost ratio is at least 3:1, and may be as high as 5 or 6:1 if benefits are sustained over 30 years. These calculations are based on conservative assumptions, and do not include all the benefits of the programme⁷.



For a full summary of all reports on the results of the programme to date, including a qualitative survey on 'Making a Cycling Town' and a short DVD which shows how the towns invested in cycling, please visit

www.dft.gov.uk/cyclingengland/cycling-cities-towns/results

1 For full details of the analysis of data from automatic counters and other sources, please see 'Monitoring Project Report 2005-09'.

2 The cycling and physical activity survey carried out for Cycling England by ICM found that the proportion of adult residents of the Cycling Demonstration Towns doing any cycling in a typical week in the previous year had risen from 24.3% in 2006 to 27.7% in 2009, an increase of approximately 3.4%-points or 14%.

3 For a detailed analysis of journey to school data in the Cycling Demonstration Towns, see pages 7-10 of 'Analysis and synthesis of evidence on the effects of investment in six Cycling Demonstration Towns'.

4 For full details, please see 'Cycling Demonstration Towns: Surveys of cycling and physical activity 2006 to 2009'.

5 For background to the comparisons with changes in cycling outside the Cycling Demonstration Towns, please see pages 14-17 of 'Analysis and synthesis of evidence on the effects of investment in six Cycling Demonstration Towns'.

6 For an analysis of the comparative rates of growth in cycling, see pages 18-20 of 'Analysis and synthesis of evidence on the effects of investment in six Cycling Demonstration Towns'.

7 For a summary of the DfT's webtag analysis, please see 'Cycling Demonstration Towns – Development of Benefit-Cost Ratios'.