

# Travel Wisely

## *Ideas for Action*

### Walking – the magic cure for all ills...

Walking should have a lot going for it, it's healthy, cheap, non polluting, encourages people to be sociable and builds community cohesion. Yet is it rarely thought about as a means of transport, we tend to think of transport as something we get into rather than as something we do.

#### The problem with walking

When Living Streets (Pedestrians' Association) asked people what problems they experienced while walking in their local area, they uncovered a litany of neglect and disrespect:

- Broken or uneven pavements,
- Pavements broken up for repairs or other works
- Obstructed pavements
- Although the space available to cars is generally much wider than that provided for pedestrians, car drivers seem to regard the pavement as parking space.
- 37 per cent of those questioned mentioned "too much traffic" as a problem.
- Walking is often fine as long as you are just going around the block and don't need to cross any roads.

#### Some facts

- In 1999/2001 we in Britain walked an average of 189 miles per year, just 3 per cent of the total distance we travel.
- The number of journeys done on foot has fallen by 20 per cent in 20 years.
- The number of miles walked per person in Britain fell 22 per cent between 1985/86 and 1999/2001.
- Between 1989/91 and 1999/2001 the proportion of primary-aged children walking to school in Britain declined from 62 to 54 per cent. The number driven to school increased from 27 to 39 per cent.
- One in four children now get taken to school by car, twice as many as 20 years ago. At the peak school travel time of 8.50am, nearly one in five cars on urban roads is taking children to school.
- A brisk 20-minute walk provides a great aerobic work-out at 0% of the cost of a gym-session, and you get to see more.

#### Reversing the trend

1. Communities can help change the trends by asking your local council to adopt a Priority Road User Order or to implement a Pedestrian Route Network. Local authorities can set clear local strategies to encourage walking, making the promotion of low-cost alternative transport forms like walking a central feature of their funding bids, introducing traffic calming schemes where appropriate, conducting pedestrian audits of all highway and traffic

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schemes to ensure they improve convenience and safety for pedestrians and conducting local transport surveys to monitor how much people walk. Chances are your local council won't have a strategic plan to encourage walking. You can lobby it to adopt a priority road user order

2. You can also write to your MP and urge him/her to press for legislation that encourages walking. The Government can help by setting targets for traffic reduction, increased walking and reduction of accidents. It could introduce a Walking Challenge with funding for innovative local authorities who take action to encourage walking.
3. You can join Transport 2000's Streets for People campaign network and change your neighbourhood to one where people come before cars.
4. Draw up a pedestrian route network linking the town centre, local shops, facilities, schools, etc. in a way that makes walking safe and pleasant, with extensive traffic calming, more street-level crossings and general environmental improvements.

## Walking Case Studies

York City Council Adopted a priority road user order and they prioritised it like this:

1. Pedestrians
2. People with disabilities
3. Cyclists
4. Public transport users
5. Commercial and business vehicles
6. Car-borne shoppers
7. Coaches, car-commuters and visitors.

It introduced a large pedestrianised Footstreets Zone in the centre, traffic calming in around 20 per cent of all residential areas and various other innovative measures to make walking safer. Within the city Footstreets areas saw a 20-50 per cent increase in pedestrian traffic.

Lothian Regional Council published its radical Moving Forward strategy in 1994. The work begun then continued when Lothian Regional Council became Edinburgh City Council, which became the first council in Scotland to sign up to the Urban Villages Concept in 1997. It is also the first city in the UK to be developing a car-free residential area, where shops and schools and other facilities will be within walking distance of people's homes.