



Council of the Isles of Scilly

Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

CONSULTATION DRAFT

2022-2032 | Sustrans | Cycling UK | Living Streets | ActivePlanning |

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Hugh Town, St Mary's Island, Isles of Scilly in watercolour. Image credit: KC Leaman 2022

Foreword



I am delighted to present this Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.

As Britain's smallest Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, our Isles of Scilly are very special to us and internationally renowned as a truly wonderful place for walking and cycling. Tourism is the bedrock of our economy.

Low car use and short travel distances also mean we have one of the highest levels of cycling by local people in the UK.

Our network of quiet roads and permissive footpaths provide access to one of Britain's most beautiful, historic, and varied landscapes, which are enjoyed by many thousands of new and returning visitors each year.

As well as serving our thriving tourism industry, our walking and cycling network provides essential connections between places, enabling residents to access work, recreational and education opportunities on the islands. This is, of course, of real importance to islanders, many of whom do not have access to private cars because of the difficulty and expense of importing vehicles.

Many of our older and disabled residents, including those who are dependent on wheelchairs or who have balance issues or pain when walking, struggle to negotiate our existing pedestrian infrastructure.

The most recent round of highway maintenance, carried out in 2014, resurfaced most of our roads but did nothing to improve our network of footways. Responses to our LCWIP survey show how much our residents are affected by poor infrastructure for walking.

This LCWIP is an opportunity for us to achieve an aspirational minimum width of 1.5m clear, accessible space for walking on all our roadside footways.

We will also seek significant improvements to accessibility on the short stretches of off-road footpath that provide essential connections whilst recognising and responding to the AONB.

Over the years the number of motor vehicles on the island has increased – slowly but definitely. Over 2,000 cars – almost one per person – are now present on an island that is only 2.5 miles long, a distance that is certainly walkable and easily cycled.

Happily, this has not so far resulted in busy roads and congestion; indeed, the road network outside of Hugh Town and Old Town are as quiet as any typical sleepy country lane on the mainland and, subject to a lower speed limit, falls within LTNI/20's criteria for safe, confident cycling in mixed traffic.

Our aim is to make active travel (together with other measures, including our island-wide car sharing initiative) a more attractive alternative to driving and to encourage residents to scrap and then not replace their vehicles.

This plan sets out a range of infrastructure initiatives to increase walking and cycling, and includes a short section discussing ways of increasing bus services to operate year-round and particularly for school journeys which, despite very high levels of walking and cycling, are a major generator of car travel demand.

Councillor Steve Sims

Lead Member for Highways and Transport

Overview and Scope

What is a Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan?

Local Authorities are empowered to write Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) by the 2014 Infrastructure Act which underpins the Government's Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Strategy. These plans are based on an objective assessment of local demand and conditions for active travel, resulting in plans to deliver enabling infrastructure including cycle tracks, new footways, pedestrianisation schemes and other measures including Low Traffic Neighbourhoods that facilitate chained trips on foot and cycle, cycle storage and promotional activities.

What are the benefits of investing in active travel?

The second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (DfT 2022) recognises that active travel produces some of the highest returns of any government investment.

Typical cost-benefits of investing in active travel exceed £4 for every £1 spent. The Department for Transport considers this as giving 'very high' value for money.

The main benefits are achieved through health savings (reducing overweight and obesity, diabetes, heart disease and other long-term illness) that impose significant financial and social costs on society. In effect, this is a 'spend to save' policy.



Tresco looking towards Brhyer.

Achieving compliance with the Equality Act 2010 will be a significant benefit of the proposed investment in newly-built footways and selected footpaths across the islands.

Tourism is a particularly important beneficiary of investment in active travel, and addressing local concerns about safety will also assist visitors who come to enjoy walking and cycling on the islands.

Important links between towns will receive investment in schemes to deliver 'reasonable improvements' in accessibility, ranging from wheelchair-accessible roadside footways to the simple addition of handrails and improved steps on important linking sections of the coast-path.

This investment will serve the needs of older people, several of whom told us they struggle to travel actively due to painful and debilitating arthritis or balance issues that could lead to serious injuries due to falls on uneven surfaces and rocky 'kerbs'.

Whilst disability itself may not be treatable, the public environment we can influence will extend people's ability to travel independently and stay as fit and healthy as possible for longer. This addresses the 'social model of disability'.