

CYCLING IN SURREY HEATH: THE YOUTH PERSPECTIVE



SURREY HEATH YOUTH COUNCIL

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Foreword – Dylan Baldock, Member of Youth Parliament

I have always known that cycling in Surrey Heath is an area that needs to be greatly improved. If the conditions are ideal, then hundreds more people will cycle around the borough. This will greatly improve the mental and physical health of young people in the borough.

The joy of cycling is that doing it doesn't just benefit you. It doesn't just make you happier. It doesn't just make you healthier. It benefits your area so much more. Ditching the car for short journeys makes a great improvement to your local area. The pollution goes down, the cost of road maintenance goes down and you are better off from it – it even saves you money!

In Camberley, the average number of cars per house in Camberley is 2.8 – that's the highest number in the country. This is appalling – why do houses need that many cars? I believe, that with the right infrastructure like cycleways, we can deter as many young people as possible from buying cars and instead, using their bike and connecting into public transport instead of driving.

This is why I believe that the work of the Surrey Heath Youth Council is vital. This report details the figures of young people who would cycle, with the right infrastructure. If the council implement the recommendations made by the Youth Council, the uptake of people using these cycleways will be beneficial.



Introduction

SHYC have decided to focus on a project related to cycling during the 2021-2022 year due to our passion for ensuring that young people within Surrey Heath have the knowledge and confidence in the council to cycle safely and travel through the area whilst also minimising impact on the environment and staying fit and healthy.

We believe that we have gathered evidence and data to warrant creating new and improved cycling infrastructure that benefits not only young people, but residents of all ages and cycling ability in order to work towards making Surrey Heath a greener and more pleasant place to live in.

In this report, we explore the results of a survey conducted within secondary schools in December 2021 and analyse the barriers that discourage students from cycling and find ways to mitigate these factors.

Benefits of Cycling

Cycling provides a wide variety of benefits, including but not limited to improvements to physical and mental health.

Environment

- **Protects biodiversity – aspects of biodiversity are essential for food, inhibiting the effects of climate change, medicines and materials [1]**
- **Less noise pollution – noise pollution is shown to affect the ability of animals to navigate, find food, attract mates and avoid predators [2]**
- **Fewer emissions that contribute to global warming**
- **Reduce in use of harmful chemicals – vehicles make use of antifreeze and other chemicals to aid with functioning that are also destructive to the environment.**
- **Less roads – roads cause water runoff that contributes to ground and water pollution, which further reduces biodiversity. The effects of this pollution are seen in London’s rivers, where only one out of 41 water bodies is classed as being in good condition, and road runoff pollution introduces trace metals and hydrocarbons into the river, causing both short term and long term damage, and in more extreme cases, will cause large populations of fish to die. [3]**

Health Benefits

- **Increased cardiovascular fitness**
- **Decreased body fat levels**
- **Prevention and management of diseases – reduced risk of cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and type 2 diabetes [4]**
- **Decreased stress levels**
- **Social activity**
- **Improves quality of sleep – moderate-intensity exercise is shown to deepen and improve quality of sleep**
- **Increased energy**

Economy

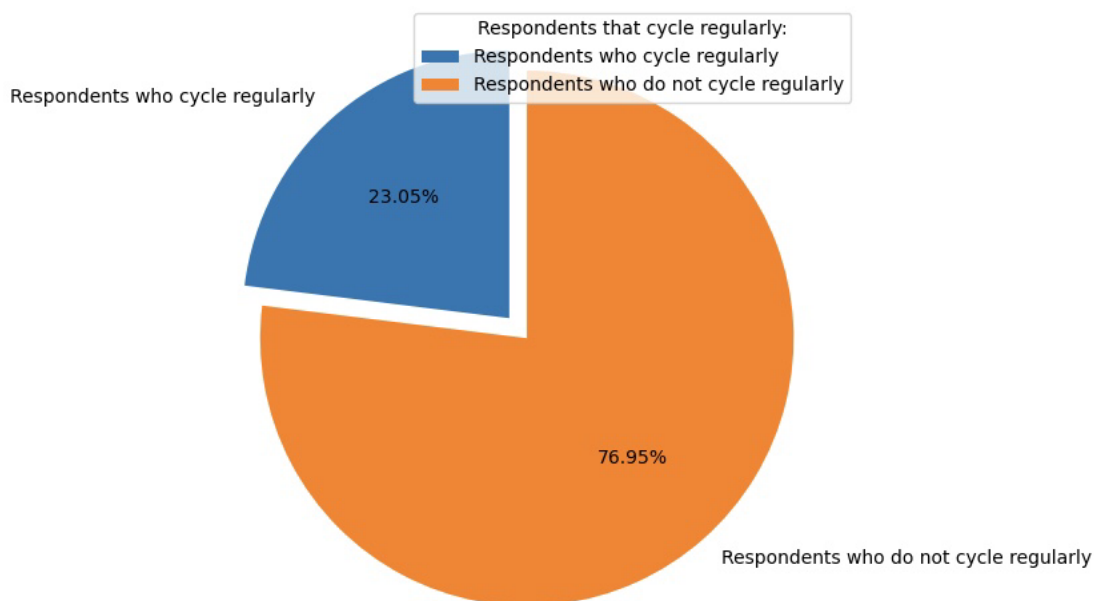
- **Increase in jobs – in Europe, the cycling industry employs more people than in the mining industry. The cycling industry includes manufacture, retail, infrastructure, and tourism. [5]**
- **Cheaper infrastructure maintenance – less money is spent on maintaining roads.**
- **Improving public health and saving NHS money – cyclists are at lower risk of being diagnosed with preventable diseases.**
- **Improving the economy via the cycle trade**
- **Boosts vitality of town centres**
- **Re-populating urban centres by attracting younger residents, as they value having easy access to employment and education and are less likely to be able to afford to drive, especially within the current climate of energy prices soaring. [6]**
- **Delivering goods efficiently – delivery services do not have to worry about the consequences of traffic and delays on public transport and can ensure that they provide quality customer service.**

The Existing Picture

Our Google Forms survey was published and sent to local Surrey Heath secondary schools (Tomlinscote School, Collingwood College, Kings International School) in mid-December and have since received over 320 responses.

The majority of participants live within Surrey Heath, with most of them located in Camberley and Frimley, but we have also received responses from people living outside of the borough, in areas such as Farnborough and Aldershot, but they utilize the Surrey Heath area in order to attend school or college.

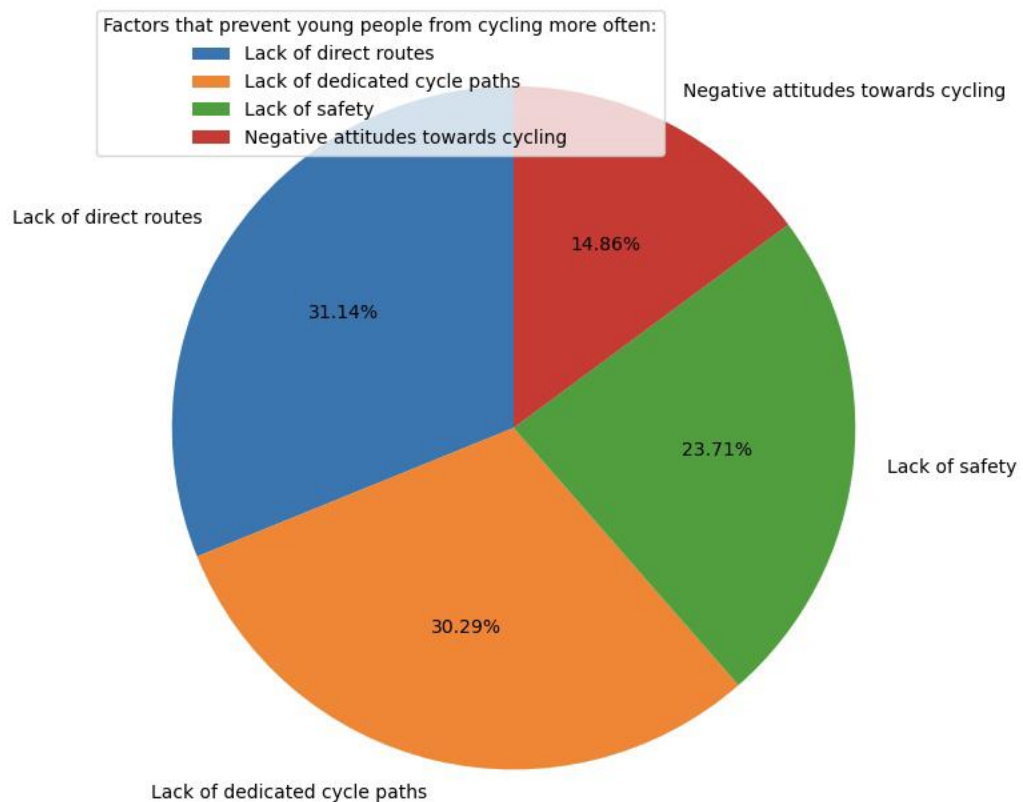
23% of respondents have reported to cycle regularly to get around, whereas 77% of young people in Surrey Heath do not.



One of the questions asked which factors prevent young people from cycling more often, the most common reasons being: (number of respondents – proportion%)

- Lack of direct routes (109 - 34%)
- Lack of dedicated cycle paths (106 - 33%)
- Lack of safety (83 - 26%)

- **Negative attitudes towards cycling (52 - 16%)**



Another question asked respondents where they would cycle to, on condition that a safe cycling route was provided: (number of respondents – proportion%)

- **School/College (183 - 57%)**
- **Town Centre (151 - 47%)**
- **High Street (106 - 33%)**
- **Leisure Centre (116 - 36%)**
- **Park/Recreation Ground (206 - 64%)**
- **Visiting Friends and Family (173 - 54%)**

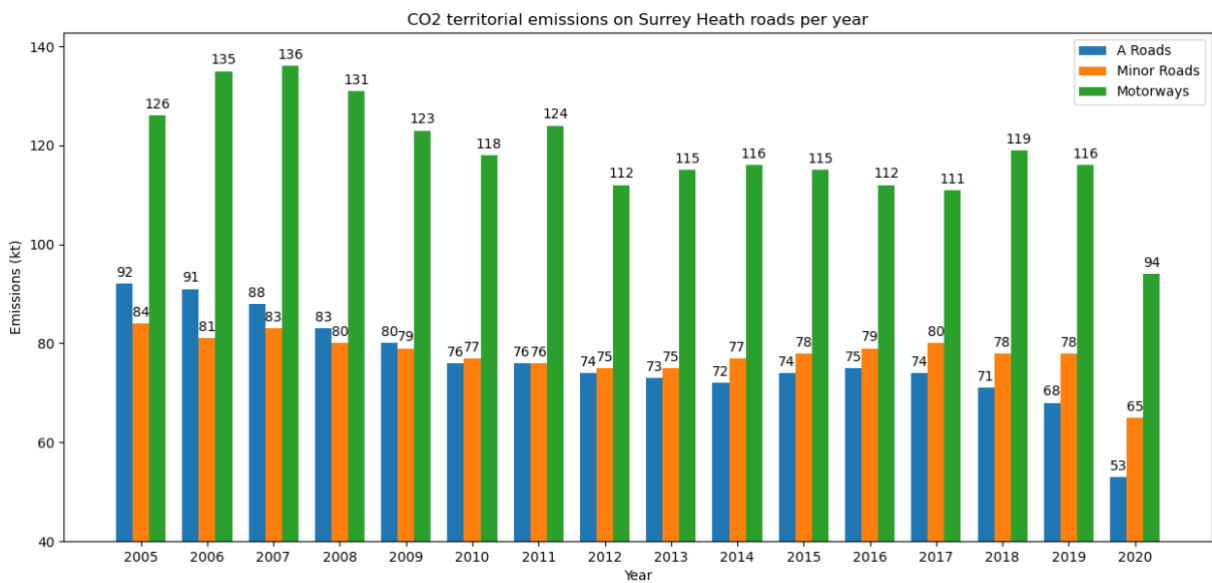
Roads that participants believe should be made safer for cyclists were:

- **Portsmouth Road**
- **Frimley Road**

- Respondents reported that it is too dangerous to cycle along this road, as the pavement on the railway bridge is too narrow

- Park Road
- Frimley Green Road
- A322
- A325
- London Road

Carbon Dioxide emissions within Surrey Heath



The above graph shows a steadily decreasing trend in carbon dioxide emissions within Surrey Heath, we believe that by building suitable cycling infrastructure to encourage people to cycle more, we could bring levels to that of 2020’s COVID carbon dioxide emissions, which will - in the long term - improve the air quality and reduce pollution in the area.

Data has been obtained from UK local authority and regional greenhouse gas emissions national statistics provided by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-local-authority-and-regional-greenhouse-gas-emissions-national-statistics>).

Case Studies

Bracknell

Bracknell is home to mountain bike trails in Swinley Forest, which is accessible to Surrey Heath residents, as well as purpose built cycle routes and intentions to build more cycle paths in new major housing developments. Additionally, Bracknell Forest Council have created circular routes intended to be used for people of all ages and abilities - these routes are regularly marked, and mainly on traffic free shared use paths or quiet roads. There are 5 notable routes (Orbital, Eastern, Northern, Southern and Western) that reach 62.5km in total. [7]

Milton Keynes

Milton Keynes Council has published their Redway Map showing their comprehensive and wide-reaching cycle network. They also have Heritage Trails and a 12 mile long Millennium Route that utilises scenic paths to visit places of cultural interest. Milton Keynes also offers free-to-use air pumps and tool stations and free cycle parking throughout the city. The council has an "Access to Bikes Scheme" which allows low income or unemployed residents and pupil premium students to utilise a bike provided by them and partake in cycle training to improve confidence on roads. In addition to this, Milton Keynes hosts several bike hire schemes provided by Santander Cycles and Lime. [8]

Proposals for Safety

Cycling safely in Surrey Heath could be enhanced by introducing better cycling infrastructure and promoting safe cycling practices within the community.

The 2 biggest barriers to young people cycling in Surrey Heath were: lack of direct routes and lack of dedicated cycle paths.

Better Cycling Infrastructure

- New cycle paths will ensure that both cyclists and pedestrians are kept safe from the danger of each other and vehicles on the road
- More focus should be placed on the maintenance of shared-use paths by cutting back overgrown bushes, as these obstruct the view of both pedestrians and cyclists
- Cycle paths should have appropriate means of drainage to prevent damage to the path caused by precipitation and sealed surfaces to reduce the cost and disruption that comes with maintenance works
- Providing adequate lighting to encourage people to cycle not only during the daytime, but also during the evenings – especially during the winter months by enhancing cyclist safety and visibility to motorists
- Young people in Surrey Heath are between 57% and 64% more likely to cycle to school/college or park/recreation grounds by bike *if* a direct cycling route was provided. Cycling infrastructure plans for the council should therefore focus on these 2 spaces and also ensure these routes are communicated to young people so they are aware and more likely to use them.

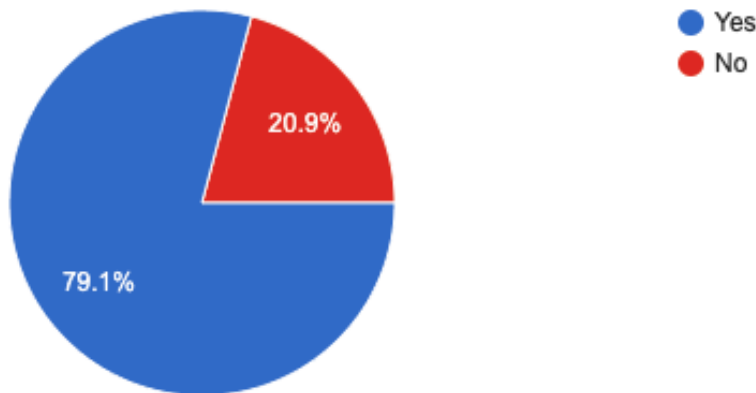
Pedestrians

- An increase in cycle paths around Surrey Heath will make pedestrians feel safer by preventing collisions and accidents
- It is imperative that pedestrians are educated on the rights of cyclists, as many hold negative attitudes towards cyclists, which makes people reluctant to use cycling as a form of transport

Proposed Routes

Our survey highlighted the key difference that would cause more young people to cycle in Surrey Heath – safe cycle paths.

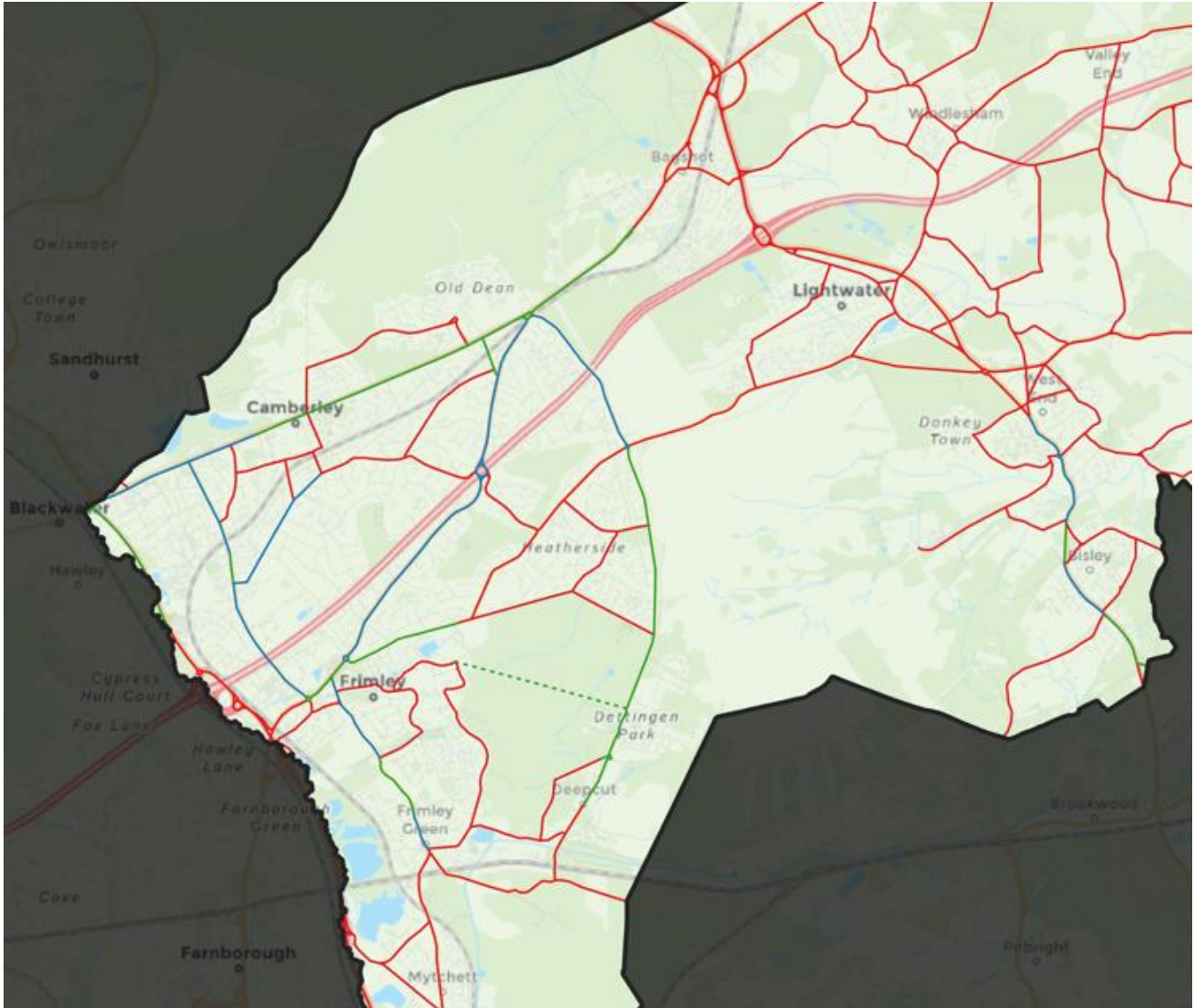
We asked over 320 young people “If safe cycle paths were provided between destinations you regularly visit, would you be prepared to cycle to them?” and the result was a resounding 79.1% yes.



This result demonstrates why the council must invest in safe cycle routes to get young people cycling and therefore encouraging them to use active travel throughout their life.

Following from our survey, SHYC have compiled some key suggestions for new safe cycling routes in Surrey Heath – aiming to enable easier access to schools, shops, parks and other facilities of interest, and furthermore encourage people to travel by bike.

The below image contrasts existing Surrey Heath cycling routes (in green) and how they would be complemented by SHYC suggested routes in blue. The remaining red lines show the network of roads in Surrey Heath (minor and residential-only roads are not highlighted).



SHYC suggested routes broadly comprise the key roads that young people in the survey responses indicated were of particular concern:

- Portsmouth Road
- Frimley Road
- Park Road
- Frimley Green Road
- A322
- A325
- London Road

These routes were considered to be important due to the number of connections to desirable destinations but currently unsafe for cycling due to sections of high vehicle throughput where no segregation for cyclists is currently provided.

As can be seen on the map, SHYC routes complement the existing routes well, starting to form a cohesive network meaning people from a wide area can feed into the cycling routes and reach almost all key destinations. The power of a connected network of routes is reflected in the government's flagship cycling strategy [9] as a key driver of people being able to make a larger number of their journeys by bicycle.

It is worth noting that the majority of SHYC routes are suggested in the Frimley-Camberley urban area. This is due to a few reasons but mainly:

- The majority of Surrey Heath's population lives in this area, meaning it is more densely populated and therefore more susceptible to a cycling revolution**
- This is the location of the majority of Surrey Heath's secondary schools and also contains most of the leisure destinations for young people**

SHYC welcomes the current Surrey County Council work towards building a new cycle route between Frimley and Camberley. This route is vitally important as our map indicates this is a big gap in the existing network of routes that should be filled. It is also vitally important that this new main route is completed to a high standard which is why SHYC is actively contributing towards the consultation process.

Conclusion

SHYC hopes that our report contributes towards more cycle infrastructure being implemented in Surrey Heath – leading towards better health and wellbeing for all as well as tackling our environmental challenges.

There is clearly a case for investment to be made - as evidenced by the large numbers of young people explaining that safe cycle routes are the key change that would need to be made to get them cycling regularly.

SHYC looks forward to working with Surrey Heath Borough Council and Surrey County Council in future to continue making the case for new routes and ensuring that they are built to the high standard that enables safety for both cyclists and pedestrians.

Endnotes

[1] The Royal Society. Why is biodiversity important? Accessible at: <<https://royalsociety.org/topics-policy/projects/biodiversity/why-is-biodiversity-important>> [Accessed: 6 July 2022].

[2] National Geographic (2022) Noise Pollution. Accessible at: <<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/noise-pollution>> [Accessed: 6 July 2022].

[3] Mayor of London (2019). Road Runoff Water Quality Study. [pdf] pp.4-5. Accessible at: <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/road_runoff_water_quality_study_exec_summary_dec_19.pdf> [Accessed: 6 July 2022].

[4] Public Health England (2018). Cycling and walking for individual and population health benefits. [pdf] pp.23-27. Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/757756/Cycling_and_walking_for_individual_and_population_health_benefits.pdf> [Accessed: 7 July 2022].

[5] European Cyclists' Federation (2014). Cycling Works: Jobs and Job Creation in Cycling Economy. [pdf] pp.6. Available at: <<https://ecf.com/system/files/141125-Cycling-Works-Jobs-and-Job-Creation-in-the-Cycling-Economy.pdf>> [Accessed: 7 July 2022].

[6] Fiona Rajé and Andrew Saffrey (2016). The Value of Cycling. [pdf] pp.16. Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/509587/value-of-cycling.pdf> [Accessed: 7 July 2022].

[7] Bracknell Forest Council. Cycling in Bracknell Forest. [online]. Available at <<https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/roads-parking-and-transport/travel-and-public-transport/cycling-bracknell-forest>> [Accessed: 30 July 2022].

[8] Milton Keynes Council. Get Cycling. [online]. Available at <<https://getaroundmk.org.uk/cycling>> [Accessed 30 July 2022].

[9] Gear change: a bold vision for cycling and walking. [online]. Available at <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/904146/gear-change-a-bold-vision-for-cycling-and-walking.pdf> [Accessed 5 August 2022].