

## Response - Andy Street (Conservative)

### PUTTING CYCLING AND WALKING AT THE HEART OF OUR TRANSPORT PLANS

The healthiest, most environmentally-friendly ways to travel around the West Midlands are on foot or on a bike. We have made some good progress in the last four years, with more money committed to cycling infrastructure, new segregated cycle routes under construction, and projects to encourage people to get active. But to overcome years of underinvestment, and significant opposition to prioritising road space for cycling and walking, we must redouble our efforts.

**1. Pledge to meet the Government's targets to double levels of cycling by 2025 and for 50% of all journeys in West Midlands towns and cities to be walked or cycled by 2030.**

**Yes**, I pledge to meet the Government's targets to double levels of cycling by 2025 and for 50% of all journeys in West Midlands towns and cities to be walked or cycled by 2030. These are ambitious targets, given the starting point in the West Midlands, which has been a car-centric region for many decades. But given the scale of change required and the urgency of addressing the health and environmental issues the region faces mean we are right to be ambitious. I also pledge that we will review the West Midlands Cycling Charter Action Plan, in order to set ourselves interim targets before 2025 and track them regularly to see how we are progressing. The Bike Life West Midlands report is an invaluable source of data on cycling in the region, but we need to go further and improve the data we collect (for example, what % of school children can ride a bike, own a bike, use a bike, differentiating summer and winter cyclists, how much switching behaviour from cars is really happening), and we should also work with Living Streets to improve the data we collect on walking in the region. Only with better data, ambitious targets and a rigorous action plan will we be able to make real progress in increasing the level of active travel in the West Midlands.

**2. Only commit funding to projects that provide high-quality active travel provision in line with LTN1/20 guidance. This provision should be assessed by an independent peer review board.**

**Work with LAs to fund and create a comprehensive West Midlands LCWIP, updating the current high level version. Future funding should largely be allocated to achieve the LCWIPs.**

**Yes**, I pledge to only commit cycling and walking funding to projects that provide high-quality active travel provision in line with LTN1/20 guidance, and to develop a new independent mechanism to scrutinise plans before funding is approved (both by technical experts in active travel, and by users through our proposed 'Citizen's Panel'). I have also committed that we should review the order of prioritisation of the West Midlands Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plan, and seek agreement to a new Combined Authority funding policy for cycling infrastructure, with local authorities offered funding by the Combined Authority on the basis of how ambitious their scheme is based on level of segregation and quality of infrastructure, rather than sharing money amongst all areas regardless of the quality of the scheme.

**3. Sign up to the Vision Zero ambition to eliminate of all deaths and serious injuries from the streets of the West Midlands. Work with local authorities to enable 20mph as the default urban speed limit.**

**Yes**, I pledge to refresh the West Midlands Regional Road Safety Strategy to set a more ambitious Vision Zero target, and work through our collaborative road safety action plan with councils, West Midlands Police. As part of this work on road safety, where there are accident hotspots, we should examine where reviewing speed limits can help reduce accidents. **However**, I believe that speed limits should be decided on a case-by-case basis as we aim to reduce road safety, congestion and journey times across the region. I do not support limiting funding for WMCA-funded active travel schemes to 20 mph zones only, as this would exclude many of our current schemes (such as on the A34 and the A45) and would reduce our options for improving cycling and walking infrastructure across the region, particularly along the key route network major roads in the conurbation.

**4. Support the local implementation of active neighbourhoods, enabling safe and more active communities. Launch a publicly-stated target and plan to reduce car dependency in the West Midlands.**

**Yes**, I pledge to work with local communities in neighbourhoods to encourage cycling and walking in their local areas through an active neighbourhoods

approach. The exact blend of measures will be appropriate to each local area, and needs to be done with sensitivity and deep engagement with the local community. We will work with local councils to turn 'consultations' on all active travel measures into deep, active and ongoing engagement. For example, we should focus our work with schools and young people in the areas where we are just about to or have just implemented new high quality cycling infrastructure. As part of Transport for West Midlands's transport strategy, we will develop new public targets around modal share (including shifts from car to public transport and from car to active travel), and these will be underpinned by detailed action plans on how to achieve these shifts.

#### **5. Appoint an Active Travel Commissioner to lead the West Midlands cycling and walking revolution; providing them with the political support and funding to achieve real change.**

**Yes**, I pledge to appoint an Executive Commissioner for cycling and walking at Transport for West Midlands. The purpose of this new role is to drive the detailed progress of West Midlands active travel schemes at pace, rather than to simply be an ambassador or figurehead for cycling and walking. The Commissioner will need to build strong working relationships with local authority cycling and walking leads and councillors across the region to build political support for new schemes. They will oversee all the WMCA funding for active travel schemes, and will have my full political support.

In addition to these five asks from cycling & walking organisations, I have set out a number of other important commitments on active travel for the next Mayoral term which are worth highlighting:

- **Work up a substantial number of detailed designs and business cases for segregated cycle routes** (at least 10 major routes in this Mayoral term) by providing scheme development funding, to overcome the challenge that there are not currently enough immediately fundable high-quality proposals coming forward from councils with the local political support to implement them. Having these high-quality schemes ready to go will be critical to securing as much of the Government's £2 billion Gear Change Active Travel Fund as possible.
- **Turn the Starley Network into continuous, safe 'Cycle Superhighways' across the region**, introduce uniform West Midlands

Cycle wayfinding signage, and **work with councils to make city and town centres 'cycle friendly'** with easy connections, for example within Birmingham City Centre. Improving the ease of navigation of our cycling network is very important to encouraging new cyclists or casual cyclists to use the network.

- **Launch an intensive new programme to reduce the number of car journeys for school drop-offs and pick-ups by providing better alternatives**, including expanding the successful Living Streets walking programme, expanding the Better Streets Community Fund to make sure that every primary and secondary school in the West Midlands has adequate cycle parking. We know that school age behaviours are important to shape behaviours later in life, and that the school run makes up a substantial proportion of car journeys in the West Midlands. Therefore a renewed focus on increasing active travel at schools should be a priority.
- Review cycle parking at every station on the West Midlands rail and Metro network, explore the development of a **multistorey cycle car parks at Curzon Street station and Interchange**, similar to those in Utrecht and Cambridge, and **work with all Combined Authority-funded developers to make sure new housing developments have cycle parking and are low traffic areas by design**, and commercial developments also look to ensure sufficient cycle parking.

Further detail on my record and commitments on active travel can be found in my [election manifesto on pages 68-71](#).

Andy Street

Candidate for Mayor of the West Midlands (Conservatives)