

Response - Liam Byrne MP (Labour)

Pledges

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.

Response to be published:

'I back the pledge and I'm committed to these targets in my manifesto. To achieve this needs a big uptick in how we deliver infrastructure. Key will be rapidly developing an integrated cycling network. We will set up GrETHA (Green Energy, Transport and Housing Agency) bringing together Transport for the West Midlands and the WMCA housing, green, energy and digital teams to provide a coordinated approach. GrETHA will broker active travel plans with each council and develop a cycling network across the region including segregated routes and use of our canals.'

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.

Response to be published:

'I back the pledge and this commitment is in my manifesto, which says that we will use LTN1/20 as a base for our active travel investment. We will assess the viability of an independent peer review, as there is balance in delivering our aims to speed and scale delivery infrastructure as well as the role of the Active Travel Commissioner.'

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.

Response to be published:

'I back the pledge. My manifesto includes a commitment to support local councils to create more school streets for safe travels to school, to set up a local road safety fund for local councillors to act in their neighbourhoods to curb speeding cars and we will work with the Police & Crime Commissioner to improve enforcement. To curb speeding vehicles, we will seek new powers from government for local enforcement for a range of driving offences and use fines to invest in road safety. We will seek devolution of Vehicle Exercise Duty paid in the region, so we can do more on road safety and transport improvements and ask for powers for councils to establish 20mph zones more effectively and economically because current rules are cumbersome. We need to be careful about not linking all funding to 20mph zones as we want to improve safety across the region and tackle hotspots and areas that are not currently in 20mph zones or may not be ahead but would benefit from safety improvements.'

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.

Response to be published:

'I back the pledge. My manifesto outlines that we will be reviewing all transport spending, so we are spending in the right way to decarbonise transport and achieve modal shift, moving to green public transport and active travel.'

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.

Response to be published:

'I back the pledge and this in my manifesto.'

Text to be published to run alongside to give an overview

Rapidly expanding cycling and walking is a central part of my plans and it will help achieve modal shift, decarbonise transport and bring health benefits. Our region has huge levels of unmet cycling demand which we want to meet.

We will establish ambitious cycling targets - double cycling levels by 2025 and with 50% of all journeys in towns and cities to be walked or cycled by 2030. To achieve this needs a big uptick in how we deliver infrastructure. Key will be rapidly developing an integrated cycling network. Will set up GrETHA (Green Energy, Transport and Housing Agency) bringing together Transport for the West Midlands and the WMCA housing, green, energy and digital teams to provide a coordinated approach. GrETHA will broker active travel plans with each council and develop a cycling network across the region including segregated routes and use of our canals. We will review WMCA funding for transport and infrastructure projects, so funding provides high-quality active travel provision and base our work on the latest local transport network (LTN1/20) guidance.

We must review the finances because the current Conservative Mayor has overseen more than a £1bn deficit in the WMCA investment budget, transport projects are delayed, and the borrowing capacity is dormant - which we will unlock to help a rapid move to a greener West Midlands. Will we hold a Project Speed review and an emergency budget to plug the gap and accelerate public transport schemes, modal shift and active travel to underpin bringing forward the net zero target, so we are the first net zero city region. GrETHA will drive integrated plans so new developments incorporate active travel and cycling. We will seek an uplift in funding from government to meet our active travel targets and the government's targets, and which must mean more devolved funding to the WMCA.

I want our region to lead green Britain, and as Mayor I will be at the forefront of championing active travel covering citizens from all backgrounds. Part of the new Active Travel Commissioner's role too will be working with communities too on boosting cycling - it isn't just building a safe and easy to use network but encouraging the confidence and change to two wheels or legs.

We will assess the roll out of the TfWM cycle hire scheme and how this can be deployed for the biggest benefit such as encouraging young people to start cycling as part of a review into how we can provide free travel for 16-18 year olds.

Over a century ago, our region pioneered the concept of '15-minute communities' though we didn't call it that then. We should lead this movement once again. We

will prioritise new housing developments that bring safe, thriving, liveable places with affordable homes, good transport, green space and ready access to jobs. To encourage walking and cycling streets and public spaces must be safe, and we will surge in 450 more police officers into neighbourhoods. We will work with the Police & Crime Commissioner to improve enforcement on speeding vehicles, and local councils to create more school streets for safe travel to school. We'll set up a local road safety fund for local councillors to act in their neighbourhoods too, seek new powers from government for local enforcement of driving offences and use fines to invest in road safety, seek devolution of Vehicle Exercise Duty paid in the region to do more on road safety and transport improvements, and ask for powers for councils to establish 20 mph zones more effectively.

We want to help everyone to be within an a 15-in walk of a green space and we will establish a plan will get us there. Our street and parks need to be much more pleasant, so we will restore derelict spaces, introduce a Forgotten Places for pocket parks, revive markets and high streets and initiate a huge tree planting programme aiming for 25% tree canopy cover by 2035. Alongside we'll establish a 'West Midlands Walks' – walking network like the London Loop or Capital Ring connecting up green spaces and heritage. We will be campaigning for a New Clean Air Act too, piloting high visibility air quality monitoring in schools, and moving to green transport more rapidly to help clean toxic air.

Our plans involve making our green future too, here in the West Midlands - the green vehicles, cycles, e-bikes, e-cargo vehicles. We will run a 'Make it Here' review to how to manufacture more in the Midlands and assess setting up a leasing company covering electric vehicles, e-taxis, e-bikes and e-cargo bikes - made locally, to help local delivery drivers, gig workers and taxi-drivers go green.