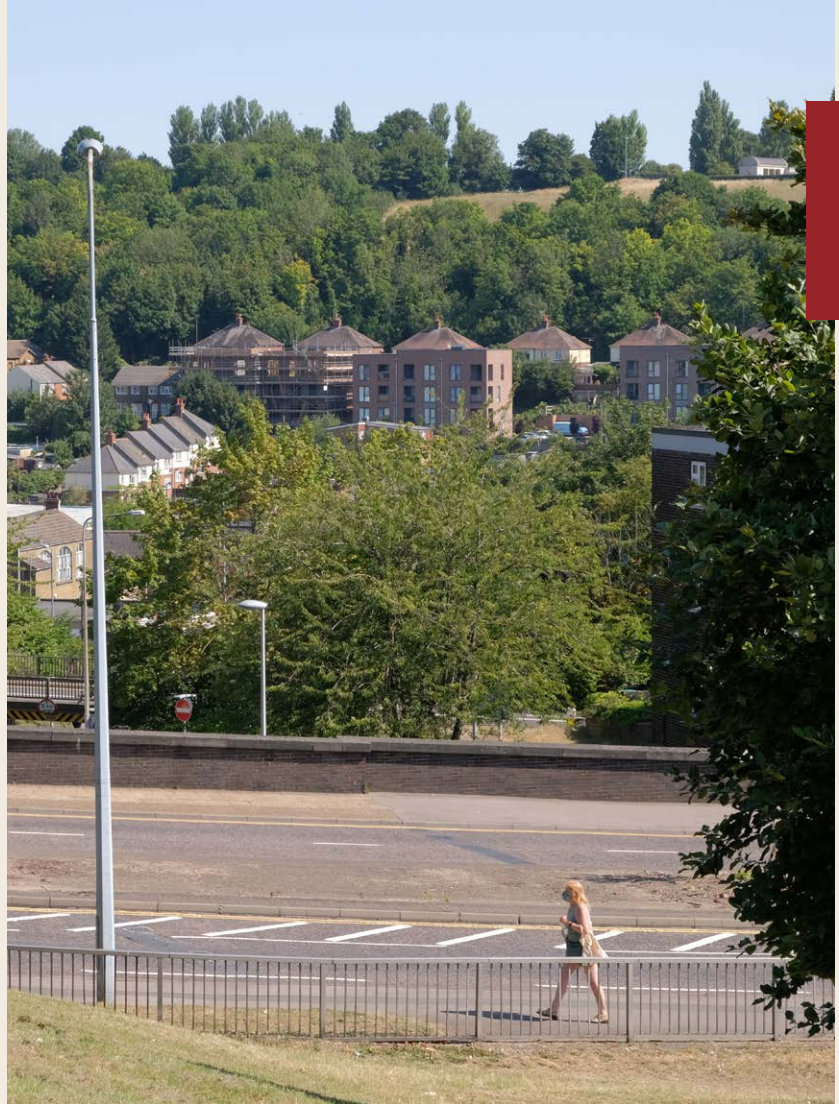


Research Report
for **No Place Left
Behind Commission**

August 2020



Cycling uphill?

New research shows that the Government's Emergency Active Travel Fund may be starting to "level up" the former "Red Wall"

Cycling uphill?

August 2020

New research shows that the Government's Emergency Active Travel Fund may be starting to "level up" the former "Red Wall"

Executive summary

Today the Create Streets Foundation launches its No Place Left Behind Commission into Prosperity and Community Placemaking, with new research into how local authorities in different parts of the country have responded to the COVID-19 crisis so far.

Our research assesses the pace and scale of local authority action to adapt the country's streets to cope with new challenges through active travel measures, and how far their efforts have been supported by the Government's Emergency Active Travel Fund. We compare 30 local authorities in the most prosperous parts of the country with 36 local authorities in the so-called "Red Wall": places where parliamentary seats switched from Labour to the Conservatives in the 2017 and 2019 General Elections, and which include some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country, with some of the worst health outcomes pre-COVID-19.¹ Our findings suggest that many "Red Wall" councils had a slow start in adapting their streets compared to councils in England's most prosperous places, but are now taking action to close this gap, backed up by targeted Government investment.

Similar numbers of local authorities in both groups are led and controlled by the Conservatives, so this is not a question of the Government simply prioritising its own voters' interests. Instead, our findings suggest the Government has shown its willingness to allocate spending in line with need - including when this means investing more in "Red Wall" communities than in the Conservative Party's traditional prosperous southern heartlands. 25 of the 30 most prosperous local authorities in our analysis are in the Home Counties surrounding London.² Our findings further underline the importance of the Government's 'levelling up' agenda for supporting the country to both cope with the immediate COVID-19 crisis and build back better.



14 of 36

former 'Red Wall' councils have received more Active Travel Funds than they asked for

1 A. Tinson, "[What can former 'red wall' areas tell us about the link between food environments and obesity?](#)", The Health Foundation (22 July 2020)

2 There is no agreed definition of the Home Counties, but here this includes: Surrey, Kent, Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, West Sussex, Hampshire and Oxfordshire



Chatham High Street
 Photo credits: Create Streets

Our findings show:

- Communities in the former “Red Wall”³ are getting more money than others to expand walking and cycling facilities through the Government’s Emergency Active Travel Fund. Since launching the £2bn fund in May 2020, the Government has put its money where its mouth is by prioritising local authorities including former “Red Wall” constituencies. This is providing a much-needed boost to some of the country’s most cash-strapped councils to adapt their streets, both for COVID-19 and for the transition to a net zero-carbon economy by 2050.
 - Local authorities that include former “Red Wall” constituencies received on average 103 per cent of the funding they asked for from the Emergency Active Travel Fund. This contrasts with England’s most prosperous local authorities, which received only 79 per cent of their requested funding.
 - “Red Wall” councils like Middlesbrough and Wolverhampton were twice as likely to receive funding equal to or greater than the amount they requested from the Emergency Active Travel Fund compared to the most prosperous places.
 - 14 out of 36 former “Red Wall” councils received more than they asked for, compared to just three of the 30 most prosperous councils.
 - The average funding per council was also higher in the 36 “Red Wall” councils than in the 30 most prosperous councils: £1,402,857 vs. £866,375.
- Prior to Emergency Active Travel Fund allocations, local authorities in former “Red Wall” communities had a slow start

³ See definition of “Red Wall” used for this report in part 3

in adapting their streets. While many councils in prosperous places were able to implement cycling and walking measures soon after the start of the country's lockdown in March 2020, "Red Wall" councils often did not act at the same scale and pace.

- Based on our analysis of Sustrans data,⁴ 11 of the 30 most prosperous places in England have taken action to adapt their streets for the crisis through measures such as widening pavements or pedestrianising high streets. However, only 1 of 36 councils including former "Red Wall" constituencies has taken such actions.
- Councils in the most prosperous places in England are over 12 times more likely to have taken action to adapt their streets than "Red Wall" councils.
- However, our analysis of very recent activity, which has not yet been picked up in the data collated by Sustrans, indicates that "Red Wall" councils are now gearing up to adapt their streets for the crisis, with many new active travel measures planned and implemented in just the last few weeks. This suggests that access to the Government's Emergency Active Travel Fund is beginning to bridge the gap in opportunities to adapt streets and expand cycling and walking facilities between communities in the former "Red Wall" and the most prosperous places.
- So far, there is mixed evidence on the quality of active travel measures taken by councils to cope with the crisis. Although our research suggests that access to funding since July has begun to help "Red Wall" councils to bridge the gap with more prosperous places, early evidence indicates that some councils need better guidance and direction on how they can best improve walking and cycling facilities to the benefit of the people living and working in their communities. Government plans to raise the standard of the active travel measures it funds through a new body, Active Travel England, are therefore welcome.
 - Transport for West Midlands, part of the West Midlands Combined Authority, received 112 per cent of its application funding, enabling Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council to implement temporary measures to improve provision for cycling in Oldbury and Smethwick. The measures have not been entirely successful, however. A cycling group in Sandwell told us, "The changes put in place to improve active travel have in fact now made it impossible. The cones are



1 of 36

*'Red Wall' councils
have taken action
during the pandemic
to adapt their street*

⁴ The largest and most up-to-date source of data on emergency walking and cycling infrastructure measures, launched on the 7th May 2020.

constantly moved and blocking pavements and the scheme has not been thought through or appears to not have been designed by anyone that uses this route as a cyclist”.

- Blackpool Council received 400 per cent of its original application (£104,000 compared to a bid value of £26,000). Despite this - and promises from the council to use the funding by mid-July to “ensure town centre pedestrian areas are free from the dangers posed by extraneous traffic” – our research found no evidence that any measures have been implemented so far.
- Walsall chose not to implement quick temporary cycle measures on the grounds of safety and its effect on car users, “the challenge is insurmountable” stated Councillor Bird.
- Some councils have failed to bid for funding altogether. Rochdale Borough Council and Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council were the only authorities including former “Red Wall” constituencies which did not apply for funding from the Emergency Active Travel Fund, opting not join the Greater Manchester Combined Authority’s bid. Perhaps unsurprisingly, no measures have so far been taken to adapt Rochdale’s streets.
- Some “Red Wall” councils have been faster to act. Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council, through the Sheffield City Region Combined Authority bid, has successfully implemented a strategy to pedestrianise many of its town centre roads during key hours. Stoke-on-Trent City Council has taken similar steps to adapt its streets.



103%

is the average amount of Active Travel Funds received by authorities with ‘Red Wall’ constituencies

This research was carried out between 8th June and 24th July 2020. It represents a snapshot view of local authority action to expand cycling and walking facilities through the early weeks and months of the COVID-19 crisis. Given the Government’s further detailed announcements on 27th July - including the creation of Active Travel England to monitor and raise the quality of the active travel measures it funds - it is clear that the Government is committed to supporting the expansion of walking and cycling networks as part of their post COVID recovery. This is an area of policy where the importance of councils’ ability to deliver is only going to grow in the years ahead.

Why steps to increase walking and cycling should be part of the “levelling up” agenda

- There is a growing body of research into the impact street design has on our physical and mental health. Good, sustainably-constructed street design which facilitates active transport and prioritises people over cars can have a significant impact on residents’ health and wellbeing, while poor street design can be detrimental.⁵ But access to healthier environments is not evenly distributed.
- **Street trees are associated with slower cars, better air quality, moderated energy usages and happier and healthier residents.** One study found that the presence of trees reduced speeds by seven to eight miles per hour. This in turn makes streets safer. A study of five arterial roadways found that mid-block car crashes declined by five to 20 per cent in areas with features such as trees or concrete planters along the road. Similarly, “urban village” areas in one study containing “on-street parking and pedestrian-friendly roadside treatments” were “two times less likely to experience a crash” than the supposedly safer roadways preferred by most transport engineers.⁶ Urban trees improve air quality.⁷ They moderate energy use for heating and cooling.⁸ People also aesthetically prefer streets with trees in them.⁹
- **Heavy traffic is bad for you.** There is a robust and widespread corpus of evidence linking over-exposure to traffic with bad health outcomes. This is true for residents and drivers. One summary concluded:
 - *‘While considerably strengthened in recent years, the link between air pollution and respiratory health was established years ago. Breathing higher concentrations of CO [Carbon Monoxide], VOC [Volatile Organic Compounds], fine particulate matter (< 2.5 microns) and other emissions released from tail pipes has consistently been shown to induce detrimental health outcomes. More specifically, concentrations of ozone in excess of 80 parts per billion sustained over an eight-hour period has been found to reduce lung capacity, increase instances of severe asthma, and in certain cases, impact life expectancy. Recent evidence also shows how increased exposure to fine particulate matter can trigger heart attacks amongst the elderly and other at risk populations.’¹⁰*

5 Cooper, E., Shivonne, G., Grollman, C., Mayer, M., Davis, B., Bankiewicz, U., Khambhaita, P., [Transport, health, and wellbeing: An evidence review for the Department for Transport](#), NatCen Social Research (2019)

6 Dumbaugh, E., “Safe Streets, Liveable Streets”, *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Vol.71 (2006), pp. 283-300

7 Nowak, D. J., Crane, D. E. & Stevens, J. C. ‘Air pollution removal by urban trees and shrubs in the United States’, *Urban forestry & urban greening* 4 (2006). pp. 115–123; Nowak, D. J., Hirabayashi, S., Bodine, A. & Greenfield, E. ‘Tree and forest effects on air quality and human health in the United States’, *Environmental Pollution* 193 (2014), pp. 119–129

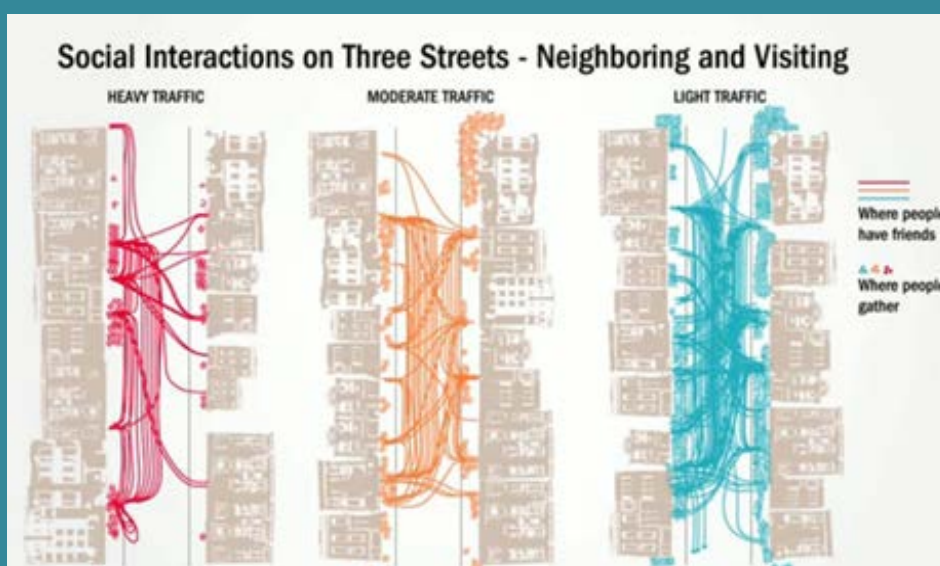
8 Akbari, H., Pomerantz, M. & Taha, H. ‘Cool surfaces and shade trees to reduce energy use and improve air quality in urban areas’. *Solar Energy* 70 (2001), pp. 295–310.

9 Smardon, R. C. ‘Perception and aesthetics of the urban-environment - review of the role of vegetation’. *Landscape and Urban Planning* 15 (1998), pp. 85-106.

10 Ewing R, Kreutzer R., *Understanding the Relationship between Public Health and the Built Environment*. LEED-ND Core Committee Report (2006) p. 4

- **Heavy vehicular traffic also has a malign impact on social connectivity and neighbourliness in residential areas** – both of which we know to be associated with wellbeing. Several studies have found that on busy vehicular streets people know far fewer of their neighbours, particularly from the other side of the carriageway. Researchers in one US study concluded of the lightly trafficked street: 'Front steps were used for sitting and chatting, sidewalks by children for playing, and for adults for standing and passing the time of day (especially around the corner store).' However, the heavy street had 'little or no sidewalk activity and was used solely as a corridor between the sanctuary of individual homes and the outside world. Residents kept very much to themselves so there was no feeling of community at all.'¹¹

Study area	San Francisco (1972)			Bristol (2008)		
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
Traffic volume	2,000	8,000	16,000	140	8,420	21,130
Avg. no friends	3	1.3	0.9	5.4	2.5	1.2
Avg. no acquaintances	6.3	4.1	3.1	6.1	3.7	2.8
Mean length of residence	8.0	9.2	16.3	-	-	-
Percentage of renters	50	67	92	-	-	-



Average number of friends and acquaintances in two studies over 40 years

¹¹ Appleyard, D, & Lintell, M., "The environmental quality of streets: the residents' point of view", Journal of the American Planning Association, (1972) p.88

¹² Hart, J., Parkhurst, G., Driven to excess: Impacts of motor vehicles on the quality of life of residents of three streets in Bristol (2011)

- In 2008, Joshua Hart and Graham Parkhurst replicated this study in Bristol.¹² The table below summarises the findings for both cities, showing the average number of friends and acquaintances in relation to the traffic volume for each street type. Both studies show that people living on streets with heavy vehicular traffic tend to have fewer friends on their street and not many acquaintances. Those living on lightly trafficked streets appear to have three or four times as many friends and twice as many acquaintances. Lots of cars make for bad neighbours.
- **Reducing traffic in town centres is normally associated with more physical activity.** One study of the effects of widespread pedestrianisation found: there was a 39 per cent increase in the number of pedestrians following pedestrianisation; people spent three times more time in the city; pedestrians' use of the city at night doubled; and overall physical activity in the city during the week trebled.¹³
- **Reducing traffic in town centres is normally associated with increased sales in local shops.** Making places better for walking can boost footfall and trading by up to 40 per cent. Comparisons of spending by transport mode reveal that pedestrians spend up to six times more in the local area than people arriving by car. In London town centres in 2011, people arriving by foot spent £147 more per month than those travelling by car. Retailers often seem to overestimate the importance of drivers' custom. A study in Graz (Austria), subsequently repeated in Bristol, found that retailers overestimated the number of customers arriving by car by almost 100 per cent.¹⁴
- **Pedestrianisation is also normally good for the air that we breath.** The pedestrianisation of Nuremberg's historic centre was associated with a traffic reduction of 25 per cent, a 30 per cent fall in Carbon Monoxide emissions and a 15 per cent fall in particulate matter.¹⁵

2 The No Place Left Behind Commission

The Create Streets Foundation's No Place Left Behind Commission into Prosperity and Community Placemaking is led by 15 expert Commissioners and delivered in partnership with Power to Change, Local Trust and the Legatum Institute.¹⁶ It is chaired by Toby Lloyd, the former head of policy at Shelter and former housing advisor to the Prime Minister. The Commission will gather evidence from people living and working in so-called "left behind" places and from stakeholders across the public, private and third sectors. Reporting in summer 2021, we will produce recommendations to help the country to "level up" as part of our recovery from the COVID-19

13 City of Melbourne & Gehl Architects, Places for People (2004)

14 Lawlor, E., The pedestrian pound: the business case for better streets and places (2013)

15 Wallström, M., Reclaiming city streets for people: chaos or quality of life (2007)

16 <https://www.createstreetsfoundation.org.uk/no-place-left-behind/>

crisis, including changes to policy and practice which will support “left behind” places to adapt to new challenges while addressing the consequences of decades of neglect. The *No Place Left Behind Commission’s* Call for Evidence is open until Monday 29th October 2020, and we invite and encourage responses from all who feel they have a stake in the “levelling up” agenda.

The *No Place Left Behind Commission* will identify changes to policy and practice to improve the quality of people’s surroundings and of lives lived in England’s poorer communities: places which have been called “left behind”, places where local people feel their environment has been neglected, places which struggle to attract interest from investors, and places which are simply unable to make the most of their assets within the existing policy framework. We are interested in the experiences of neighbourhoods that have a distinct identity and may have a strong sense of community and even pride, but that feel that they are in decline or are suffering neglect by more affluent parts of the country. Given the devolved nature of planning and much of housing policy in the UK, the Commission will produce recommendations focused on England.

We use the term “left behind” in our initial work despite some misgivings, as this term has significant currency in public debate about these places and amongst many people living and working in them. No Place Left Behind will explore alternative ways of thinking and talking about so-called “left behind” places as part of our work over the next year.

3 Our research methodology and data

3.1 Where?

We have analysed areas covered by two groups of 66 (lower-tier or unitary) local authorities across England:

- **36 “Red Wall” councils**, defined as local authorities containing at least one parliamentary constituency which switched from Labour to Conservative control in either of the 2017 or 2019 general elections, but excluding seats which Labour won in 2017 but reverted to Conservative control in 2019.
- **The 30 most prosperous councils in England** as defined by the 2016 Legatum UK Prosperity Index. This measures prosperity through seven pillars, going beyond the usual socio-economic factors to include measures of community, natural environment and social capital.¹⁷ Local authorities from other nations of the UK are excluded from this analysis.

¹⁷ [The UK Prosperity Index](#), Legatum Institute (2016); The seven pillars are: Economic Quality, Business Environment, Education, Health, Safety & Security, Social Capital, and Natural Environment.

	UK Prosperity Index Ranking	Local Authority	Region (NUTS)	Council Political Control ¹⁸
Most Prosperous (UK Prosperity Index 2016)	1	Waverly	South East	NOC
	2	Mole Valley	South East	LD
	3	Winchester	South East	LD
	4	St Albans	East	NOC (LD)
	5	Chiltern	South East	CON
	6	South Oxfordshire	South East	NOC (LD)
	7	Mid Sussex	South East	CON
	8	East Hampshire	South East	CON
	10	Guildford	South East	NOC (LD)
	11	New Forest	South East	CON
	12	Wokingham	South East	CON
	13	Woking	South East	NOC (CON)
	14	Hart	South East	NOC
	15	Bath and North East Somerset	South West	LD
	17	Tunbridge Wells	South East	CON
	18	West Berkshire	South East	CON
	19	Three Rivers	South East	LD
	20	Somerset West and Taunton	South West	LD
	21	Surrey Heath	South East	NOC (CON)
	22	Vale of White Horse	South East	LD
	23	Reigate and Banstead	South East	CON
	24	Eastleigh	South East	LD
	25	East Hertfordshire	East	CON
	26	Bracknell Forest	South East	CON
	27	West Dorset	South West	CON
	28	Richmond upon Thames	London	LD
	29	Chichester	South East	NOC (CON)
	30	North Somerset	South West	NOC
	31	North Hertfordshire	East	NOC (LAB)
	32	Elmbridge	South East	NOC

¹⁸ Largest party shown in brackets for No Overall Control (NOC).

	UK Prosperity Index Ranking	Local Authority	Region (NUTS)	Council Political Control ¹⁸
Red Wall LAs	388	Blackpool	North West	LAB
	387	Middlesbrough	North East	NOC
	384	Sandwell	West Midlands	LAB
	380	Stoke-on-trent	West Midlands	NOC (CON)
	378	Doncaster	Yorkshire & Humber	LAB
	377	Birmingham	West Midlands	LAB
	373	Wolverhampton	West Midlands	LAB
	369	Walsall	West Midlands	CON
	364	Rochdale	North West	LAB
	362	North East Lincolnshire	East Midlands	CON
	360	Rotheram	Yorkshire & Humber	LAB
	356	Bolsover	East Midlands	NOC (LAB)
	351	Wakefield	Yorkshire & Humber	LAB
	349	Bassetlaw	East Midlands	LAB
	345	Barnsley	Yorkshire & Humber	LAB
	341	North Lincolnshire	East Midlands	CON
	337	Derby	East Midlands	NOC (CON)
	335	Mansfield	East Midlands	NOC (LAB)
	334	Barrow-in-Furness	North West	LAB
	333	Hyndburn	North West	LAB
	332	County Durham	North East	LAB
	328	Dudley	West Midlands	NOC (CON)
	322	Burnley	North West	NOC
	302	Ashfield	East Midlands	IND
	300	Redcar and Cleveland	North East	NOC
	298	Darlington	North East	NOC (CON)
	259	Kirklees	Yorkshire & Humber	LAB
	257	Northumberland	North West	NOC (CON)
	244	Bolton	North East	NOC (NOC)
	217	Derbyshire North East	East Midlands	CON
	214	Wigan	North West	LAB
	202	Newcastle-under-Lyme	West Midlands	NOC (CON)
201	Copeland	North West	LAB	
185	Gedling	East Midlands	LAB	
178	Allerdale	North West	NOC	
173	Bury	North West	LAB	

3.2 How much money for active travel as part of the COVID response?

On 9th May the Secretary of State for Transport, Grant Shapps, announced the Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF). Tranche 1, worth £250 million, is supporting the installation of temporary and emergency projects for the COVID-19 pandemic, to allow safe movement with social distancing given the pressures on public transport capacity, which at some points in the crisis has been reduced to 10 per cent of its total capacity.¹⁹

The aim of the EATF is to embed walking and cycling as part of long-term commuting habits and achieve a range of associated health, air quality and congestion benefits. The EATF is the single largest source of ring-fenced funding for promoting walking and cycling ever announced for England – although Active Travel England’s total budget of £2bn for 2020-25 is dwarfed by Government funding commitments for repairing and expanding England’s roads in its March 2020 Budget, which stand at £27bn for 2020-25. Nevertheless, this is arguably the first time the Government has so prominently recognised the importance of active travel, and announcements of EATF funding have been widely welcomed. The latest YouGov polling shows the public is overwhelmingly in favour of measures to encourage walking and cycling, with 6.5 people supporting changes to their local streets for every 1 person against.²⁰

As part of our analysis, we asked where the EATF has been allocated and investigated the difference between what local authorities requested and what they received. Since our sample consists of lower-tier and unitary authorities, some results reflect bids to the EATF from Combined Authorities of which the councils in our sample are part, or from County Councils with whom they share responsibilities. Where this is the case, because we do not have data on how funding was distributed locally, we have used results for wider bid areas.

The findings from this analysis are set out in section four.

3.3 What active travel measures have been taken?

Finally, we investigated how many and what kinds of active travel measures local authorities have implemented since the start of lockdown. Active travel measures taken included creating new cycleways and reducing speeds on roads to make cycling safer and road closures and pavement extensions to give priority to cyclists and pedestrians.

We analysed this research in two ways:

19 GOV.UK. 2020. Transport Secretary’s Statement On Coronavirus (COVID-19): 9 May 2020. [online]
20 BIKEISBEST. 2020. #BIKEISBEST - Sign Our ‘Share The Road’ Petition. [online]

- Firstly, we analysed the ‘Space to move’ dataset compiled by Sustrans.²¹ This extensive dataset launched on the 7th May, seeking to compile the active travel measures taken by councils since the start of lockdown to make their public spaces safer and more accessible. The findings from this analysis are set out in section five. Due to the process of logging, some of the most recent measures in mid-July are yet to be included in the dataset.
- To understand more about how “Red Wall” councils are beginning to adapt their streets, we performed a case-study analysis of their activity since July using publicly available sources (local media, social media, council websites and announcements, etc). The findings from this analysis are set out in sections five and six.

4 Findings on who is getting what: communities in the former “Red wall” are getting more money than others to promote active travel.

4.1 “Red wall” councils are getting more than they asked for

Of the 36 “Red Wall” councils analysed, only Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council and Rochdale Borough Council did not receive funding of any form. These two local authorities were the only Greater Manchester councils not to put forward active travel projects to take advantage of new funding.

The remaining 34 “Red Wall” councils have all received EATF funding in some form – whether from an independent application or through a bid from an upper-tier authority or Combined Authority. On average, “Red Wall” councils received 103 per cent of the money they asked for. The most successful bid in our sample came from Blackpool City Council, which has received 400 per cent of its original £26,000 funding application. The least successful bid came from Nottinghamshire County Council (including “Red Wall” constituencies Bassetlaw, Ashfield and Gedling), which received 46 per cent of its original £573,000 funding application. The former “Red Wall” councils have received an average of £1,402,857 each.

²¹ Available at <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/space-to-move/>

36 "Red Wall" councils	Amount received (£)	Proportion of amount requested (%)
Blackpool	£104,000	400%
Middlesbrough	£481,542	112%
Sandwell	£3,850,997	112%
Stoke-on-Trent	£126,000	75%
Doncaster	£1,437,000	100%
Birmingham	£3,850,997.00	112%
Wolverhampton	£3,850,997	112%
Walsall	£3,850,997	112%
Rochdale	£0	-
North East Lincolnshire	£42,000	50%
Rotherham	£1,437,000	100%
Bolsover	£443,000	100%
Wakefield	£2,513,000	100%
Bury	£3,174,000	100%
Allerdale	£260,323	112%
Gedling	£263,250	46%
Copeland	£260,323	112%
Newcastle-under-Lyme	£366,000	50%
Wigan	£0	-
Derbyshire North East	£443,000	100%
Bolton	£3,174,000	100%
Northumberland	£2,262,000	100%
Kirklees	£2,513,000	100%
Darlington	£3,850,997	112%
Redcar and Cleveland	£481,542	112%
Ashfield	£263,250	46%
Burnley	£782,087	112%
Dudley	£3,850,997	112%
County Durham	£2,262,000	100%
Hyndburn	£782,087	112%
Barrow-in-Furness	£260,323	112%
Mansfield	£263,250.00	46%
Derby	£227,923	112%
North Lincolnshire	£41,000	100%
Barnsley	£1,437,000	100%
Bassetlaw	£263,250	46%
Average	£1,402,857	103%
Weighted Average ²²	£1,402,857	102%

²² Simple average is calculated on percentage differentials of funding asked for and received. Weighted average adjusts for size of successful bids in each area. As will be seen, the comparison is very similar in both cases.

4.2 Prosperous places are getting less than they asked for

The high success rate of bids to the Emergency Active Travel Fund from local authorities including former “Red Wall” constituencies stands in contrast to the results for England’s 30 most prosperous places. On average these places received only 79 per cent of the money they asked for. Waverley, Mole Valley, Woking, Surrey Heath, Reigate and Banstead and Elmbridge all fell under the Surrey County Council bid that received only 50 per cent of funds requested. Likewise, local authorities such as Wokingham Borough Council and South Oxfordshire District Council (part of Oxfordshire County Council’s bid) received only 50 per cent of the money requested. The most prosperous places have received an average of £866,375 per council area. As a result, “Red Wall” councils were more than twice as likely than the most prosperous places to receive what they asked for or more from the Emergency Active Travel Fund.

30 most prosperous councils	Amount received (£)	Proportion of amount requested (%)
Waverley	£848,000	50%
Mole Valley	£848,000	50%
Winchester	£863,000	100%
St Albans	£1,247,329	73%
Chiltern	£513,943	112%
South Oxfordshire	£298,500	50%
Mid Sussex	£781,000	100%
East Hampshire	£863,000	100%
Guildford	£848,000	50%
New Forest	£863,000	100%
Wokingham	£76,000	50%
Woking	£848,000	50%
Hart	£863,000	100%
Bath and North East Somerset	£0	-
Tunbridge Wells	£1,600,000	100%
West Berkshire	£124,000	100%
Three Rivers	£1,247,329	73%
Somerset West and Taunton	£120,000	100%
Surrey Heath	£848,000	50%
Vale of White Horse	£298,500	50%

Reigate and Banstead	£848,000	50%
Eastleigh	£863,000	100%
East Hertfordshire	£1,247,329	73%
Bracknell Forest	£57,000	75%
West Dorset	£128,486	112%
Richmond upon Thames	£5,000,000	100%
Chichester	£781,000	100%
North Somerset	£106,140	112%
North Hertfordshire	£1,247,329	73%
Elmbridge	£848,000	50%
Average	£866,375	79%
Weighted Average	£866,375	75%

The nature of the data available on local authorities' interventions since the beginning of the UK's lockdown period does not allow us to compare the quality of local authorities' active travel programmes. It is possible that the higher levels of successful bids to the Emergency Active Travel Fund in "Red Wall" councils may partly reflect less ambitious bids in these places compared to the most prosperous places. However, our findings nevertheless clearly indicate that when it comes to active travel, the Government is starting to target funding at "Red Wall" areas.

5 Findings on who is doing what: "Red Wall" fell behind without funding but are catching up

5.1 It's been a slow start

The Government's decision to reopen non-essential shops in England on the 15th June marked the first significant easing of the country's lockdown from 23rd of March. Our research suggests that many "Red Wall" councils were less well equipped than those in prosperous places to provide suitable and safe pedestrian and cycle measures to support public access to non-essential shops as they reopened, given reduced public transport capacity resulting from remaining restrictions to control the pandemic.

According to Sustrans, only 12 of the 66 local authority areas in our sample have implemented any form of active travel intervention since the start of lockdown in England. These low overall figures become even more concerning when we consider the disparity in action between the most prosperous places in England and "Red Wall" councils. Over a third of most prosperous local authorities

(11 out of 30) provided some form of intervention. Places such as Bath, Winchester, Richmond upon Thames and North Somerset undertook extensive early intervention measures, including pavement widening, road closures and cycleways to ensure safe conditions. In contrast, only 1 of the 36 “Red Wall” councils, Birmingham City Council, provided any form of intervention, despite the obvious need. Many less prosperous places appear to have been unable or unwilling to deliver any active travels measures to adapt their streets in the early weeks and months of the crisis prior to EATF funding being made available.

5.2 The Emergency Active Travel Fund has helped the “Red Wall” to gear up

The good news is that our case study analysis shows that some “Red Wall” councils are starting to take more effective measures. In the early weeks and months of the COVID-19 crisis, only one council acted. Our further findings suggest that this is now changing, thanks to the Emergency Active Travel Fund and the Government’s decision to target funding at so-called “left behind” places. Sandwell, Stoke-on-Trent and Doncaster have all started to plan and implement measures over the course of July following successful funding bids.

Case study: Doncaster Council are changing the way their streets are used. Doncaster Council have taken the decisive decision to part-pedestrianise key town centre streets as part of the Sheffield City Region Combined Authority active travel application. In July, Councillor Bill Mordue said, “We want Doncaster to be ready for when the lockdown is lifted”.²³ From 9th July High Street, Market Place, Baxter Gate, Priory Place and Printing Office Street were closed to all traffic from 10.30am – 4pm, until further notice. Gates to restrict car flow have been erected.

Case Study: Stoke on Trent City Council are getting cracking. Working with Stoke-on-Trent City Centre Business Improvement District, Stoke-on-Trent City Council implemented a vehicle ban on three major town centre streets. Piccadilly, Brunswick Street and Cheapside have all been pedestrianised for up to 12 months, with a view to giving local businesses every opportunity to recover as lockdown measures ease. Restaurants will be allowed to use the pedestrianised streets for customer seating, helping them to develop viable business models in compliance with social distancing regulations. One shop owner stated, “I am more than happy with this. It will be safer for customers and a nicer environment for them. It will make the street more user-friendly and more appealing.”²⁴

²³ Doncaster Free Press, 2020 ‘Road closures, pedestrian one-way systems and temporary cycle lanes to be introduced when Doncaster town centre re-opens’ [online]

²⁴ S Andrews, R., 2020. Council Bans Vehicles From These Three Stoke-On-Trent Roads For Next 12 Months - And Here’s Why. [online]



Stoke on Trent town centre free of cars²⁵

6 Findings on who is doing what: some “Red Wall” councils still seem unsure what to do or how to do it

Our research indicates that extra funding has begun to help “Red Wall” places bridge the gap with more prosperous places in encouraging walking and cycling to benefit of the people living and working in their communities. However, more clearly needs to be done to find and implement the right measures to adapt streets in some places.

Case Study: Rochdale did not ask for anything. Rochdale Borough Council was one of two authorities in the Greater Manchester Combined Authority area not to take part in the joint bid for £3,174,000 for the first tranche of funding from the Emergency Active Travel Fund. In a statement of disappointment, a spokesperson from Walk Ride Rochdale stated that Rochdale Borough council “doesn’t appear to be taking the impending transport crisis as seriously as other councils are across Greater Manchester and further afield”.²⁶ This may be a little unfair. There are plans (predating the COVID-19 crisis) for a £1.2 million cycle lane running into the centre of Rochdale, though we do not know when these would have been implemented in the absence of COVID-19.

Case study: Wigan falling for the same problem. Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council failed to put forward any projects for consideration, becoming the only other authority within the Greater Manchester Combined Authority area not to bid.

25 Bottle Craft, 2020 It’s looking like another beautiful day on the Costa del Stoke! We’re open 2-10 with walk ins available through until 7. Come grab a beer in the sunshine!! [\[online\]](#)

26 Statham, N., 2020. Cycling And Walking Group Criticises Council For Not Bidding For Upgrades Cash. [\[online\]](#)



Greenwood Street,
Rochdale²⁷

Case study: Blackpool seem unsure what to do. Blackpool City Council received 400 per cent of its original application (£104,000 not £26,000). Despite this and promises from the council to use the funding by mid-July to “ensure town centre pedestrian areas are free from the dangers posed by extraneous traffic”, no measures have yet been implemented.

Case Study: Walsall unwilling to act fast. Due to the concerns around the mixing of cyclists and car users, Walsall Council chose not to consider early temporary cycle interventions. With apprehensions around safety, Councillor Bird highlighted that “with the pop-up lanes, cars would be mingling with riders on a regular basis”. He went further to state that “To me I think the challenge is insurmountable”.²⁸ As a result, Walsall has failed to implement any measure.²⁹

Case study: Sandwell acting fast, but is it right? At the beginning of July, Transport for West Midlands (part of the West Midlands Combined Authority) received 112 per cent of its application funding, enabling Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council to implement temporary measures to improve provision for cycling in Oldbury and Smethwick. The measures have not been entirely successful, however. Temporary cones and crash barriers were used for all measures and as a result many were moved and sometimes ignored by car users. As Cycle Everyday, a cycling group in Sandwell, told us, “The changes put in place to improve active travel have in fact now made it impossible. The cones are constantly moved and blocking pavements and the scheme has not been thought through or appears to not have been designed by anyone that uses this route as a cyclist”.

²⁷ Greenwood Street by [Reading Tom](#) used under CC BY 2.0.

²⁸ MACMICHAEL, S., 2020. Council Leader Rejects Pop-Up Cycle Lanes Because He Believes Bikes And Cars Cannot Mix Safely. [online] road.cc.

²⁹ Statham, N., 2020. Cycling And Walking Group Criticises Council For Not Bidding For Upgrades Cash. [online]



Temporary crash barriers moved in Smethwick³⁰

8 Conclusion: A first step on a long journey

Our findings indicate that many “Red Wall” councils had a slow start in adapting their streets compared to councils in England’s most prosperous places, but are now taking action to close this gap, backed up by targeted Government investment. Similar numbers of local authorities in both groups are led and controlled by the Conservatives, so this is not a question of the Government simply prioritising its own voters’ interests. Instead, our findings suggest the Government has shown its willingness to allocate spending in line with need - including when this means investing more in “Red Wall” communities than in the Conservative Party’s traditional prosperous southern heartlands. 25 of the 30 most prosperous local authorities in our analysis are in the Home Counties surrounding London.³¹

It is very welcome to see the Government prioritising new investment in some of the country’s most deprived places through its Emergency Active Travel Fund. After decades of under-investment in their places, spaces and buildings, England’s so-called “left behind” communities are now firmly in the Government’s sights. In the years ahead, “levelling up” must go far beyond how Government allocates emergency funding and responds to the immediate pressures of the pandemic. What is needed is a systematic approach to improving life and the quality of people’s surroundings in so-called “left behind” places, supporting neighbourhoods to adapt to new challenges while addressing the consequences of decades of neglect.

³⁰ BBC Radio West Midlands, 2020 In Smethwick this morning where #Sandwell Council have issued an urgent warning after spike in cases of Covid-19. ³⁵ in just over a week. PH officials are desperate for workplace info on positive cases from test & trace. Not provided at the moment so difficult to link cases. [\[online\]](#)

³¹ There is no agreed definition of the Home Counties, but here this includes: Surrey, Kent, Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, West Sussex, Hampshire and Oxfordshire

Over the next year, the Create Streets Foundation's No Place Left Behind Commission into Prosperity and Community Placemaking will identify policy and practice to support this systematic approach to "levelling up" the country as part of our recovery from COVID-19. We will seek to influence national and local government policy, practice, investment and current spending on: so-called "left behind" places; regeneration and high streets; maintaining and improving access to greenspace, blue space and other public spaces; and communities policy, including asset ownership, planning and housing. The Commission will emphasise community empowerment and control over local assets, as long experience suggests that capital investment-led regeneration initiatives have often failed to support and mobilise the type of bottom-up, locally-based activities that are often most effective.³² It will identify ways in which bottom-up activity can successfully scale up its impact without losing what makes it unique.

Our newly-launched Commission starts by gathering evidence from people living and working in so-called "left behind" places and from stakeholders across the public, private and third sectors. Our Call for Evidence is open until Monday 29th October 2020, and we invite and encourage responses from all who feel they have a stake in the "levelling up" agenda.

³² Achieving Local Economic Change: What Works?, Local Trust 2019, https://localtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Achieving-local-economic-change_Oct_2019.pdf

GET IN TOUCH

Toby Lloyd
Chair, No Place Left Behind Commission

Rose Grayston
Project Manager
rose@createstreetsfoundation.org.uk

<https://www.createstreetsfoundation.org.uk/no-place-left-behind/>



The Commission's work is possible due to kind support from



Local Trust

karbon
homes

