

## Active Travel England

### Purpose of report

For information and discussion

### Summary

The Department for Transport (DfT) has created a new executive agency, Active Travel England (ATE). ATE's role is to manage the national active travel budget, approve and inspect schemes and will be a statutory consultee on major planning applications.

Chris Boardman is currently the interim National Commissioner of ATE and has been invited to talk about his vision for ATE, its priorities in its formative years, and how it will interact with councils.

Is this report confidential?

Yes  No

### Recommendation

That the EEHT Board:

1. Notes the report and engages with the interim National Commissioner for ATE to discuss priorities of the new organisation and how it intends to work with and support local authorities.

### Action

As directed by the Board

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## Active Travel England

### Background

1. The Department for Transport is to create a new executive agency, Active Travel England (ATE), with its headquarters in York. The Government [formally announced](#) ATE in January 2022
2. ATE will manage the national active travel budget, awarding funding for projects which meet the new national standards set out in 2020. It will inspect finished schemes and may ask for funds to be returned for any which have not been completed as promised, or which have not started or finished by the stipulated times.
3. ATE will also begin to inspect, and publish reports on, highway authorities for their performance on active travel and identify any particularly dangerous failings in their highways for cyclists and pedestrians.
4. As well as approving and inspecting schemes, ATE will help local authorities, training staff and spreading good practice in design, implementation and public engagement. It will be a statutory consultee on major planning applications to help ensure that the largest new developments properly cater for pedestrians and cyclists.
5. ATE's establishment follows the government's commitment of £2 billion for cycling and walking over this parliament and will exist to support their national Gear Change strategy to transform active travel.
6. There have already been [three tranches of funding](#). The intention for ATE is to secure multi-year (3-year) capital funding settlements for local authorities towards the end of this year. ATE/ DfT are also hoping to announce 22/23 revenue funding allocations for local authorities shortly. Thereafter ATE plans to announce 2-year revenue funding settlements for relevant councils towards the end of this year, alongside the capital settlements.
7. ATE will be a national organisation with staff located across England, although its headquarters will be in York
8. Chris Boardman MBE was appointed, on an interim basis, as the first National Active Travel Commissioner for England. The role of the Commissioner is to ensure that cycling and walking are the natural first choices for short journeys; supporting a vision for half of all journeys in towns and cities being cycled or walked by 2030.
9. The LGA broadly welcomed Government's measures, as announced in its [Gear Change vision document](#), to boost cycling and walking but have said that councils should be given the freedom to work with their local communities to get on with planning active travel infrastructure such as cycling schemes. As with any new body with inspection or

statutory consultee powers, we would expect them to be proportionate in undertaking them, reflecting the wider remit of councils and the resources available to them.

### **Suggested areas for discussion**

10. Board members may wish to consider the following areas for discussion with Chris:

- *Whether and how ATE will seek to balance the different roles (between expert support and advice, inspection and as a statutory consultee) so that councils get the most constructive help.*
- *His views on how best to deal with locally controversial schemes; how best to take people with you*
- *Over the coming years, councils will be seeking to strike a balance on how they allocate road space – e.g. between cyclists, pedestrians, EV car users, public transport, shared transport etc. Will ATE take that into consideration in its advice and inspection role.*
- *In his views, are the Government doing enough to support councils with their efforts; what more can they do? What more can councils do?*
- *How can the LGA and ATE work together to help with local ambition and the Government's vision?*

### **Implications for Wales**

11. ATE does not cover Wales. Improving and promoting active travel routes and facilities has been enshrined in law in Wales since 2013. The Active Travel Wales Act 2013 places a duty on Welsh highways authorities to make annual improvements. Further information on funding and support in Wales can be found [here](#).

### **Financial Implications**

12. There are no financial implications

### **Implications for Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion**

13. The Government updated its cycle infrastructure design guidance in July 2020 ([Local Transport Note 1/20](#)). There will be an expectation that local authorities will demonstrate that they have given due consideration to this guidance when designing new cycling schemes and, in particular, when applying for Government funding that includes cycle infrastructure.

14. LTN 1/20 states:

- “Cycle infrastructure should be accessible to everyone from 8 to 80 and beyond: it should be planned and designed for everyone. The opportunity to cycle in our towns and cities should be universal.
- The ability to deliver a right to cycle requires infrastructure and routes which are accessible to all regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or disability and does not

create hazards for vulnerable pedestrians. Improvements to highways should always seek to enhance accessibility for all.”

### **Next steps**

15. The LGA will continue to work closely with ATE at an officer level, with the aim of ensuring that ATE is able to undertake its work in an efficient and effective manner, and that its engagement with local authorities is as constructive and proportionate as possible.
16. Officers will also continue to campaign for long-term certainty of funding for councils so that they can more effectively plan and integrate active travel measures in new and existing developments and within their wider transport decarbonisation and local transport plans.

### **Biography – Chris Boardman MBE**

*Interim National Active Travel Commissioner, Active Travel England*

17. Chris Boardman was appointed as the interim active travel commissioner in January 2022 by Transport Secretary Grant Shapps MP tasked with setting up Active Travel England to deliver on the government’s ambition for active travel contained in Gear Change. Chris is also Chair of Sport England.
18. Prior to this Chris was Transport Commissioner in Greater Manchester and before that the first ever Greater Manchester Cycling and Walking Commissioner working for Andy Burnham from 2017.
19. A former professional cyclist, Chris won a gold medal in the individual pursuit at the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games. Chris launched his own range of bikes, BOARDMAN Bikes, in 2007 and is company chairman. Chris is also a prominent broadcaster for BBC and ITV.