



Bath and North East Somerset

Active Travel Masterplan

February 2025

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Active Travel Masterplan



Executive Summary

We need to make walking, wheeling and cycling the natural choice for a lot more of our journeys. Currently, over a third of car trips across Bath and North East Somerset are less than 5km¹.

The Active Travel Masterplan for Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) outlines an ambitious vision to make walking, wheeling and cycling the natural choice for a lot more of our journeys. It forms a comprehensive plan that sets out the existing and future network of active travel infrastructure required to enable and provide for sustainable and healthy forms of transport, as well as addressing the Climate Emergency, reducing inequalities, improving air quality, tackling obesity and reducing traffic congestion across Bath and North East Somerset. The plan is for all types of active travel whether it is for commuting, leisure, business or everyday journeys such as travelling to a local shop, school or doctor's surgery. Recognising that over a third of car trips in B&NES are suitable for active travel, the plan targets significant shifts toward sustainable travel modes. This transformation supports our Climate Emergency

commitments by improving connectivity and enabling active travel to become a viable, attractive and natural choice for more of our trips thereby reducing dependency on cars. The plan encompasses all forms of non-motorised movement and aims to provide the infrastructure and support needed to make these options safe, accessible, and convenient for everyone, including children, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities.

The vision of the Masterplan is to create well-connected, sustainable communities with reduced reliance on cars, enabling healthier and more accessible spaces. This aligns with broader national goals, including the UK's "Gear Change" initiative, which advocates for increased walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure. The plan's goals include reducing transport emissions, improving public health through active travel, and supporting economic growth by making urban spaces more pleasant and accessible.



1 <https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Bath%20Report%20Aug%202020%20-%20Final%20edited.pdf>

The plan identifies the benefits of active travel as a means to support environmental, health, economic, and social goals. Active travel provides a sustainable way to decarbonise our transport network by shifting short journeys from cars to zero-emission modes like walking, wheeling, and cycling. Health impacts are also significant, with active travel helping to prevent chronic conditions and enhance mental wellbeing. Economically, active travel boosts local business revenue and yields a high return on investment, outperforming road infrastructure spending. Socially, it enhances connectivity and inclusion by offering an affordable travel option, reducing barriers for low-income households, and improving access to essential services.

It also identifies major barriers to active travel adoption in B&NES, such as fragmented networks, narrow roadways, topographical challenges, and limited funding. Addressing these issues requires a cohesive approach, prioritising the creation of safe and continuous routes, reallocating road space, and promoting a supportive culture for active travel.



Introduction

We need to make walking, wheeling and cycling the natural choice for a lot more of our journeys. Currently, over a third of car trips across Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) are less than 5km



Bath & North East
Somerset Council

Improving People's Lives

The importance of walking, wheeling and cycling, or ‘active travel’ as an affordable and accessible mode of transport has become increasingly apparent over recent years. Within Bath and North East Somerset, we need to make walking, wheeling and cycling the natural choice for a lot more of our journeys. Increased active travel can help tackle some of the biggest challenges we face - improving air quality, combatting climate change, improving health and wellbeing, addressing inequalities, and tackling congestion on our roads.

“We want - and need - to see a step-change in cycling and walking in the coming years. The challenge is huge, but the ambition is clear. We have a unique opportunity to transform the role cycling and walking can play in our transport system, and get England moving differently.”

Gear Change – A Bold Vision for Cycling (2020)

Bold action is needed to help create the places we want to live and work – with better connected, healthier and more sustainable communities.

It will help deliver clean growth, by supporting local businesses, as well as making it more pleasant to move around and between our rural areas, towns, and city.²

Based on the 2021 census data, 18% of trips to work made by residents of Bath and North East Somerset are made on foot with 3% travelling on bike, 7% by public transport and 65% driving a car or other private vehicle³.

What is Active Travel?

The term “active travel” within the Active Travel Masterplan (the “Plan”) refers to walking and cycling, as well as horse riding and wheeling which includes the many other modes of wheel-based travel that enable and encourage a shift away from journeys being made by a private car. Active travel therefore encompasses all the various ways of travelling shown in Figure 1.1 below.

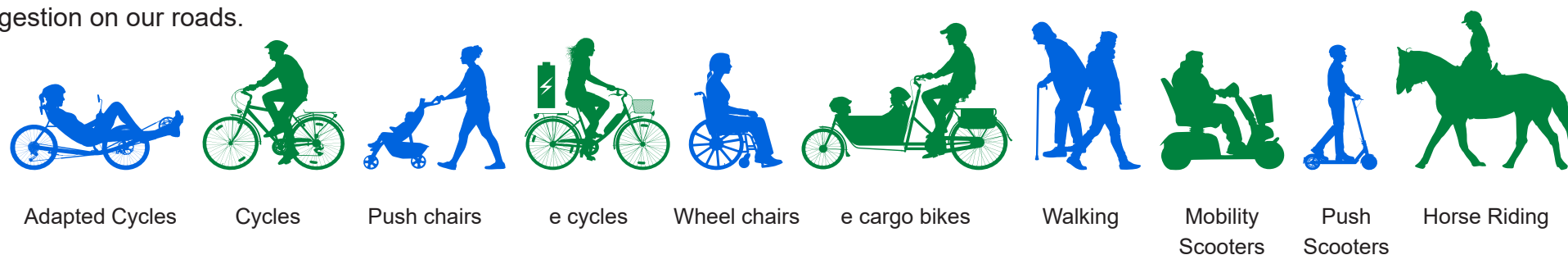


Figure 1.1 Active Travel Modes

² [https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Bath Report Aug 2020 - Final edited.pdf](https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Bath%20Report%20Aug%2020%20-%20Final%20edited.pdf)

³ The 2021 Census Data was collected during the lockdowns caused by the global pandemic. Consequently, we have excluded individuals working from home and included only those commuting to work

1.1 What is the Purpose of the Active Travel Masterplan?

When walking, wheeling and cycling, people are vulnerable when they mix with motorised traffic. Experience elsewhere in Europe clearly indicates the benefits of delivering safe active travel networks that protect people from busy motor traffic. These networks can enable a high proportion of our trips to be made by sustainable transport.

The Active Travel Masterplan will be a comprehensive plan that sets out the existing and future network of active travel infrastructure required to enable and provide for sustainable and healthy forms of transport, as well as addressing the Climate Emergency, reducing inequalities, improving air quality, tackling obesity and reducing traffic congestion across Bath and North East Somerset. The plan is for all types of active travel whether it is for commuting, leisure, business or everyday journeys such as travelling to a local shop, school or doctor's surgery.



The Active Travel Masterplan outlines our long-term vision for enhancing walking, wheeling, and cycling within our community. While it sets ambitious goals for the future, immediate funding for active travel initiatives will be sourced from regional opportunities such as the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS). The Masterplan is designed not to replace these regional delivery mechanisms but to complement and support them. It aims to contribute to, build upon, and facilitate the implementation of future regional active travel plans, including the potential development of local LCWIPs at the Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) or local community level.

The objectives of the Active Travel Masterplan are set out in Figure 1.2.

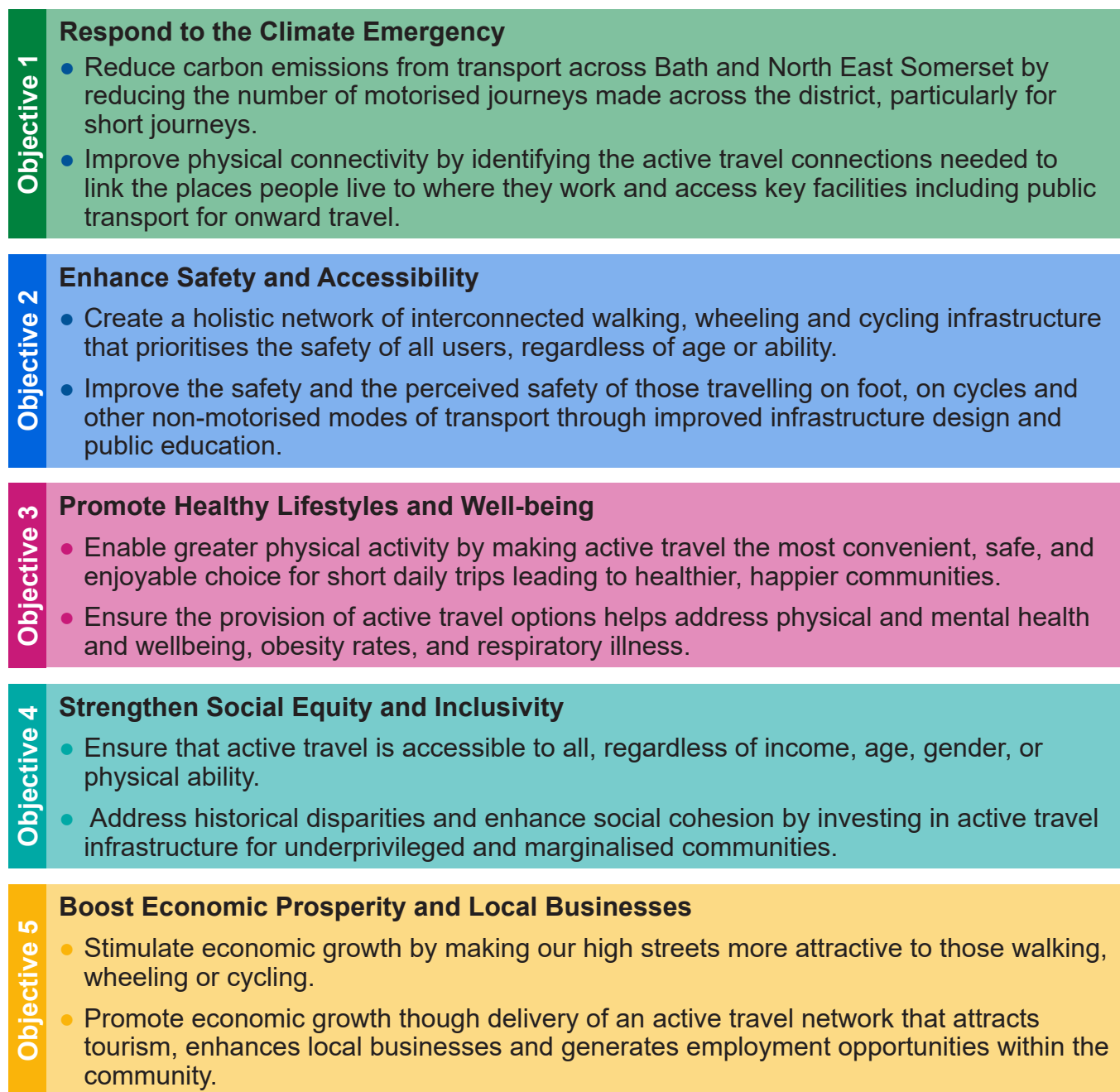


Figure 1.2 Objectives

1.2 Vision

This section outlines the overarching vision that will shape the Plan's implementation and ultimately enhance the quality of life for all of our residents.

The Active Travel Masterplan, guided by a progressive vision and a set of ambitious objectives, seeks to transform our communities into well-connected, vibrant, healthy, and environmentally sustainable spaces, resilient to climate change.

In our envisioned future, streets and pathways will be inviting and accessible, supporting an active lifestyle, reducing the need to travel by car and contributing towards carbon neutral mobility.

B&NES is committed to a transformative approach towards active travel. Our vision extends beyond mere infrastructure improvements; it encompasses a fundamental shift in how we perceive and prioritise walking, wheeling, and cycling within our transport network.

The Gear Change strategy⁴ has provided a framework for our aspirations, aligning with the national ambition to elevate active travel to the forefront of sustainable transportation solutions. B&NES recognises that achieving a step change in the level of provision for active travel is not just desirable, but imperative. This commitment is fundamental if we are to address our Climate Emergency, which mandates decisive action towards decarbonising our transport network.



4 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/904146/gear-change-a-bold-vision-for-cycling-and-walking.pdf

Our vision extends beyond meeting local needs; we aim to emulate the success stories witnessed across Europe in terms of walking, wheeling and cycling levels. By doing so, we not only enhance the health and quality of life for our residents but also make substantial strides towards achieving carbon neutrality. The experiences of cities and regions in Europe underscore the transformative potential of prioritising active travel, not only in terms of health and well-being but also as a catalyst for sustainable urban development.

B&NES recognises that we cannot achieve the vision for active travel alone. Addressing the Climate Emergency requires shared responsibility and collective action from residents, businesses, and local authorities alike. Whilst we can provide the infrastructure that is needed, to successfully decarbonise our transport network will require the cultivation of a culture that embraces walking, wheeling, and cycling as preferred modes of transportation. Moreover, it necessitates collaboration across sectors, engagement with communities, and a commitment to innovation and best practices.

The Plan will identify where the improvements and measures are needed to enable those people who can, to make the change in their travel habits, keeping the roads clearer and improving journeys for people who have no other option than to drive. It will also establish how we can ensure that more of our roads and public spaces are able to be used by those on active modes. This plan is designed for everyone, not only for those who currently walk, wheel and cycle regularly, but also to support and enable people of all ages and abilities to choose active, sustainable modes of transport.

By implementing infrastructure improvements and behaviour change campaigns, the measures identified in the Active Travel Masterplan will improve the safety, accessibility, and attractiveness of active travel options, while contributing to a reduction in carbon emissions from vehicular transport and the health and wellbeing of residents through supporting them to change their travel habits.



1.3 B&NES Active Travel Potential

Active travel has enormous potential across B&NES given the number of trips that are currently undertaken which are less than 5km (3 miles) long. Around half (49%) of all journeys to work fall within this distance bracket, a distance that is ideal for walking, wheeling or cycling. Furthermore, all public transport and car trips start and end with active travel.

Figure 1.3 shows the population density (number of usual residents per square kilometre) of the B&NES district by Middle Super Output Areas (MSOA). This plan highlights the key settlements within the district which is a key consideration in the Active Travel Masterplan. The figure shows that the most populated settlements in B&NES are Bath, Keynsham, Midsomer Norton and Radstock.

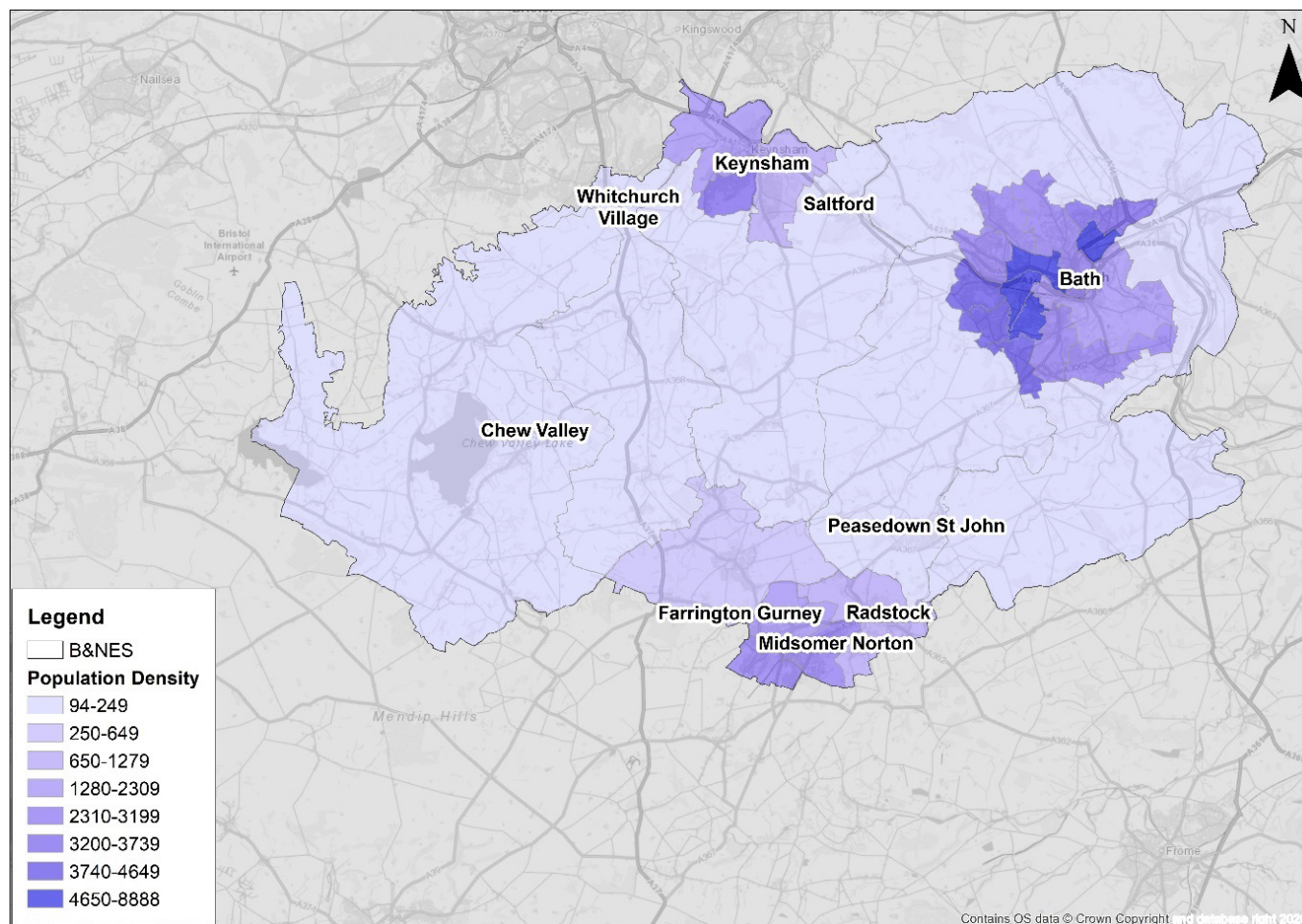


Figure 1.3 Population Density by MSOA (2021 Census)

B&NES itself is a relatively small district, measuring 27km east to west and 16km north to south at its longest distance. Figure 1.4 below shows a 1 mile to 5 mile isochrone for cycling from the centre of B&NES. This shows the distance that can be reached by those travelling on foot or by cycle and highlights just how much of the district is within a relatively easy walking and cycling distance.

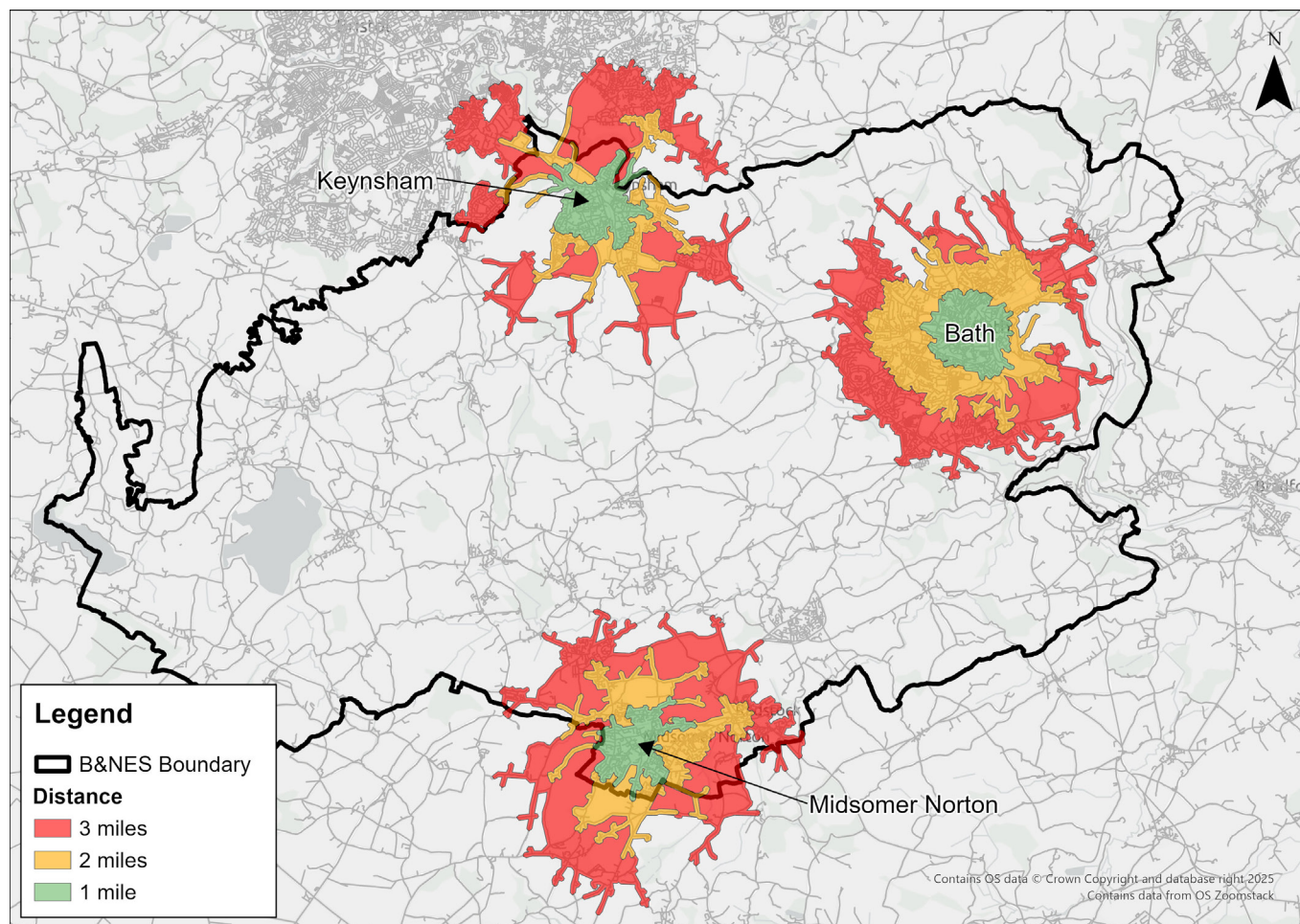


Figure 1.4 1 mile to 3 mile cycle isochrone for B&NES⁵

⁵ <https://classic-maps.openrouteservice.org/directions?n1=52.324429&n2=0.038452&n3=12&b=0&c=0&k1=en-US&k2=km>

Terrain is also a key consideration in how much potential the B&NES district has for active travel. Figure 1.5 below shows the elevation of the district and highlights that in particular areas around Bath are subject to high elevations which may present a challenge for active travel in the area.

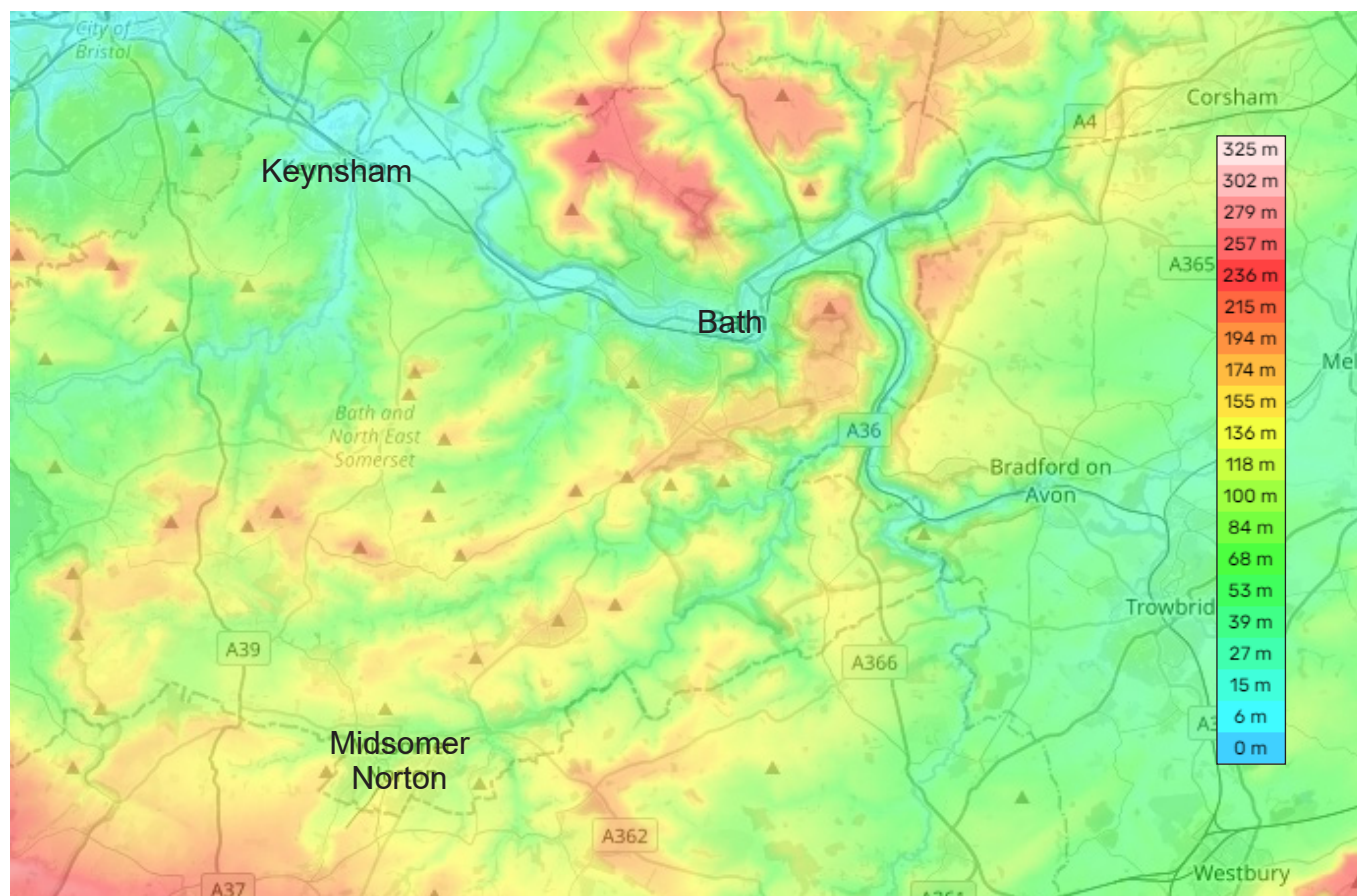


Figure 1.5 Elevation in B&NES⁶

⁶ <https://en-gb.topographic-map.com/map-tqv9m/Bath-and-North-East-Somerset/?center=51.35678%2C-2.4939>

For local journeys, with the right conditions, active travel is very convenient. Depending on the length of journey, car parking pressures and congestion, walking, wheeling and especially cycling can be the fastest and least stressful way to get around.

According to the National Travel Survey results for 2022 the most common trip purpose was shopping, with 18% of journeys being made for this purpose. Commuting journeys accounted for 14% of the average person's trips in this year⁷. When looking at commuting trips across Bath & North East Somerset it can be seen that the preferred method of travel is by car with over 68% choosing to drive and over 5% being a passenger. Figure 1.6 below shows the percentage of commuting journeys that were undertaken by a number of different modes. The second most popular mode after the car was to walk to work, followed by the bus, then those who chose to cycle which is slightly higher than those choosing to use the train.

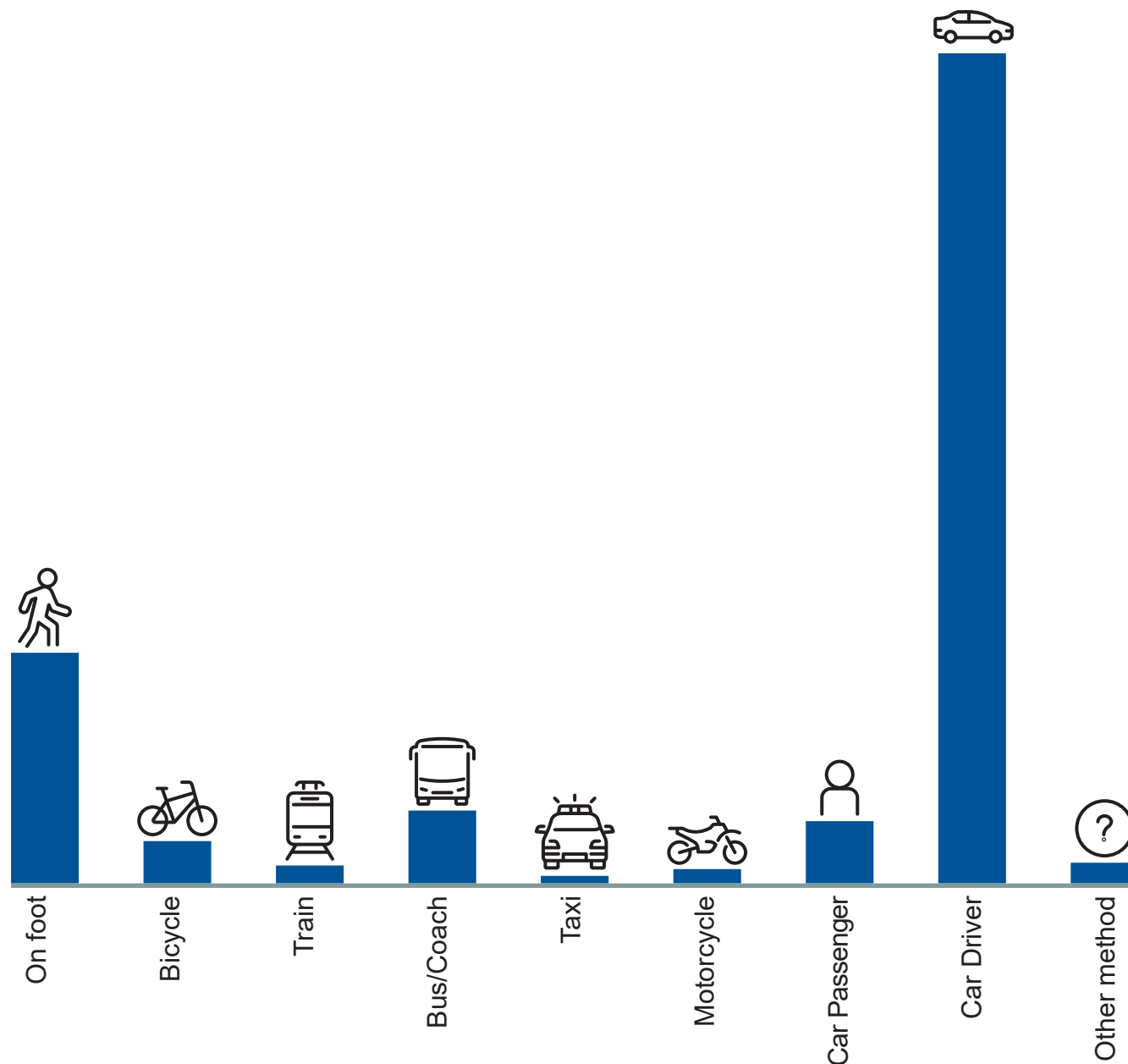


Figure 1.6 Journey to work mode share (2021 Census)

⁷ <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64ef09d0da845100146323f7/nts-2022-factsheet.pdf>

As well as the various different modes of transport that people use to travel to work, the Census data also provides information on the distances that people across B&NES are travelling to get to work.

Figure 1.7 shows that the largest number of people travelling to work across B&NES are only travelling up to 2km. In fact, the majority of commuters in B&NES have short travel distances to work, with almost half (49%) covering up to 5km, approximately three miles. This proximity underscores the potential for enabling walking, wheeling and cycling as viable and sustainable commuting options across the district.

The Journey to Net Zero Transport Plan for Bath⁸ identified that 1 in 3 car journeys in Bath start and end within the city, equating to 50,000 car movements a day. A lot of these are trips that for many could be undertaken by active travel. As part of the development of the Journey to Net Zero Transport Plan for Bath, two public consultations were undertaken to give the people of Bath a say on their priorities for the next 10 years. The first of these consultations asked people their views on a number of transport themes, including improving pedestrian and blue badge holder access and supporting cyclists. Improving pedestrian spaces was well supported by

all respondents, with 82% (795) saying this was important or quite important and only 7% (67) stating that this was not important or not important at all. Supporting cyclists was one of the most popular themes in the consultation, with 504 respondents selecting this theme as important to them.

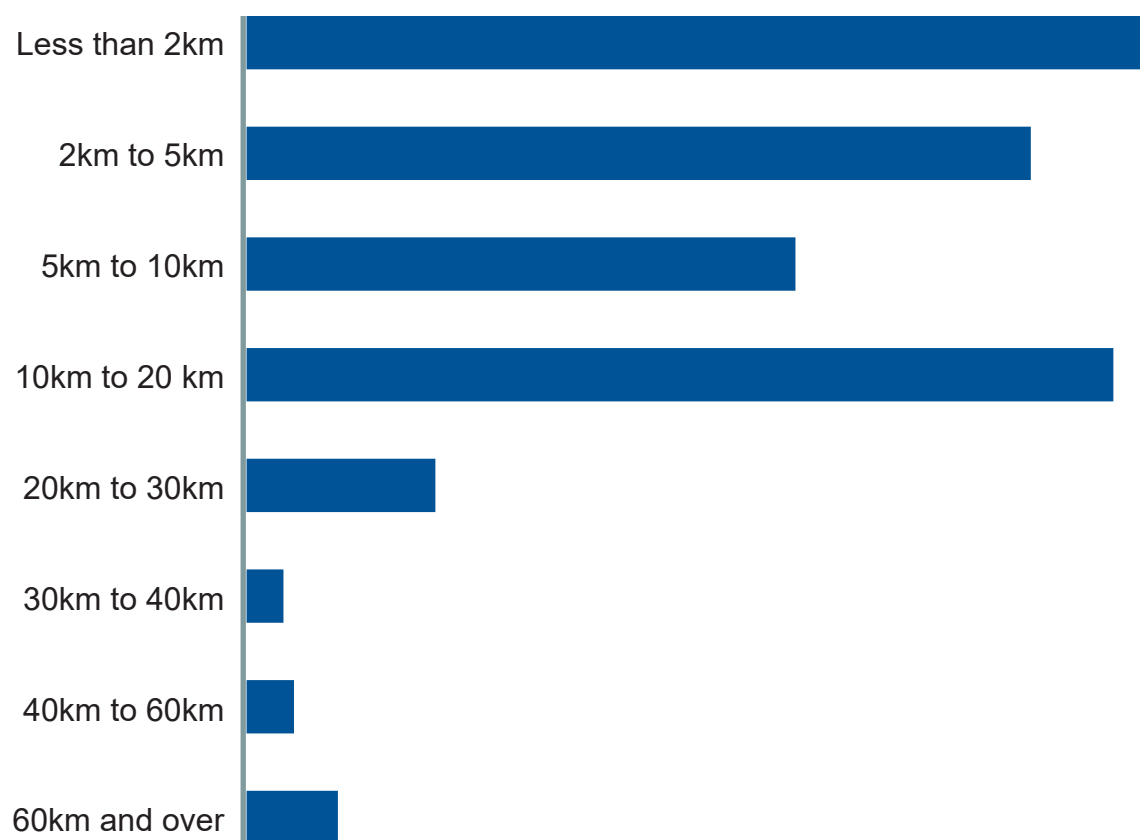


Figure 1.7 Distance travelled to work – excluding working from home (2021 Census)

⁸ <https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/B%26NES%20JNZ%20FINAL%20-%20ACCESSIBLE%20WEB%20VERSION.pdf>

The 2021 Census provides data for the percentage of residents in B&NES that commute to work by driving a private vehicle. Figure 1.8 below highlights areas within the district that have a high car driver mode share for commuting journeys. The highest levels of car commuting within the district follow the lines of our main transport corridors including the A37, the A367 and the A362. This shows areas where there is potential to enable more residents to choose an active form of travel through the provision of improved and dedicated active travel infrastructure. Bath is notably the area that has the lowest car driver mode share for commuting trips with areas of the Somer Valley and Whitchurch Village having higher car driver mode shares.

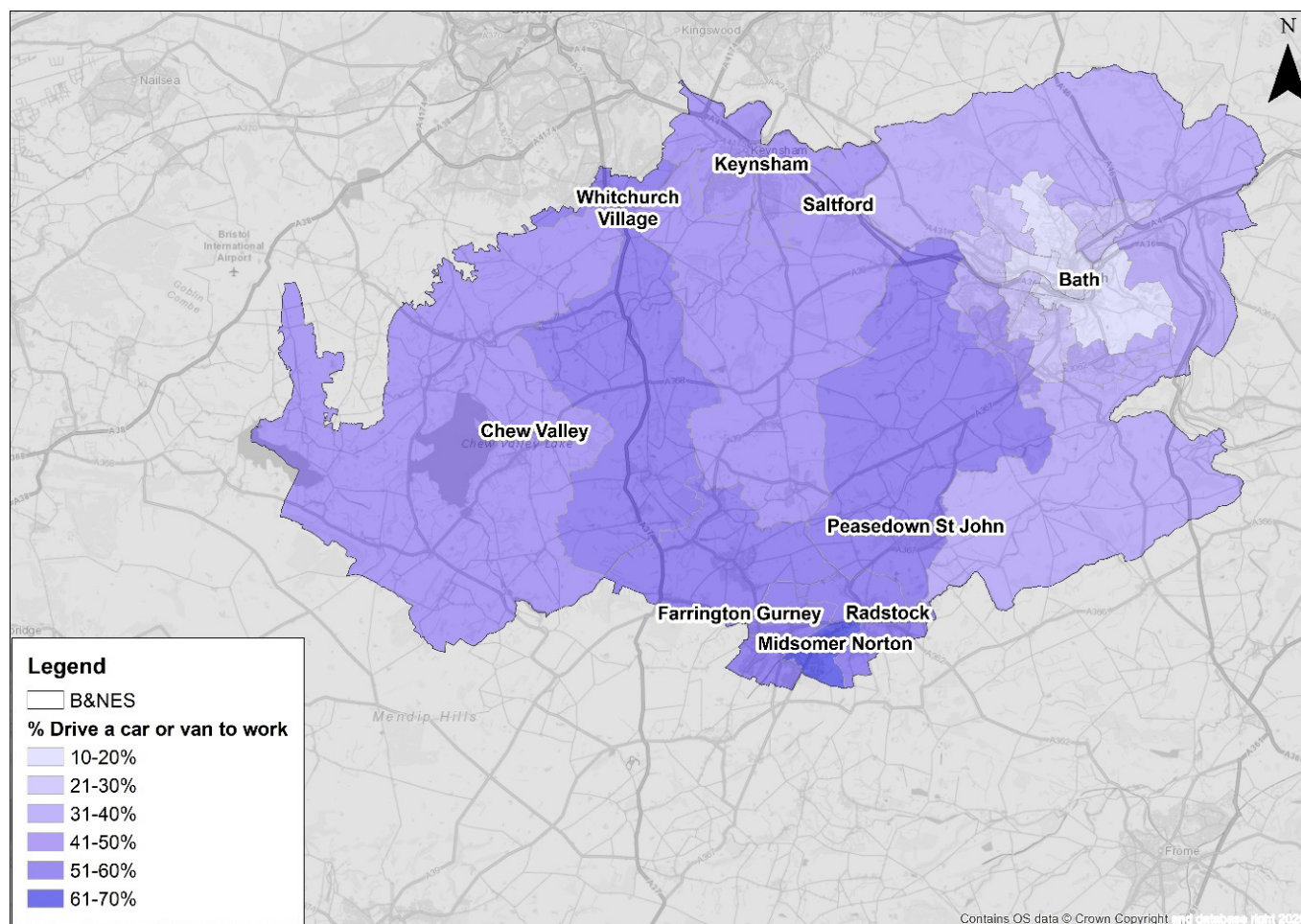


Figure 1.8 Percentage of People who Commute to Work using a Private Vehicle by MSAO (2021 Census)

Census data on car ownership has been extracted and presented below. This shows the areas of the district that are more reliant upon active transport and public transport to make a journey to their workplace. Currently 20% of the population of B&NES do not own their own vehicle and are therefore reliant on public transport and active travel⁹. Figure 1.9 illustrates that Bath has the highest percentage of households that do not own a private vehicle, followed by households in the Somer Valley and Keynsham. Unsurprisingly, the rural areas of the district, such as the Chew and Somer Valleys, have the highest levels of car ownership whilst our towns and city have lower levels of car ownership.

“Currently 1 in 5 people living in B&NES do not own a vehicle”

Approximately 1% of Bath and North East Somerset Council’s (B&NES) adopted highway assets are dedicated cycle routes, 30% are footways, 32% are public rights of way and 37% are carriageways. This illustrates the need to improve active travel infrastructure in the district, in particular cycling which is the main focus of this report.

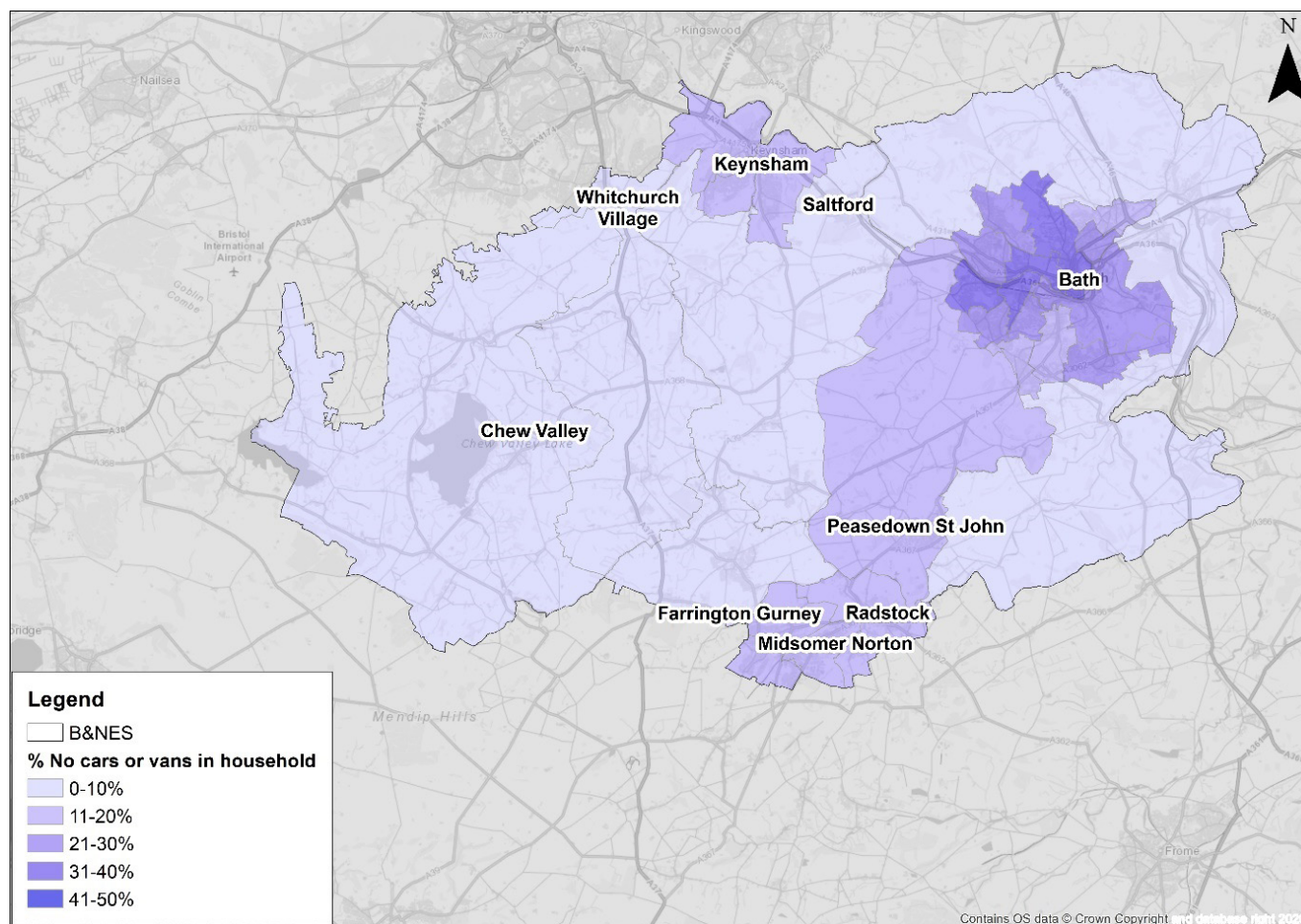


Figure 1.9 Percentage of Households that do not own a Car or Van (2021 Census)

⁹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS045/editions/2021/versions/4>

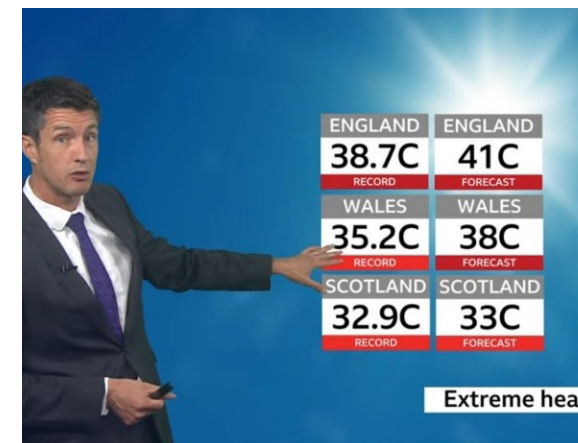
1.4 B&NES Climate Emergency

In 2019 B&NES was one of the first councils to make a declaration to tackle the Climate Emergency. We committed to provide the leadership to enable the Bath and North East Somerset area to become carbon neutral by 2030 as well as doing the same for our own operations. We are committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2030.



In the UK, climate change is making some extreme weather events more frequent and more serious. The winter floods in 2013-14, which cost the economy £450 million in insured losses, occurred due to

record rainfall in England and Wales¹⁰ and were made more likely by climate change¹¹. The European summer heatwave in 2018, which led to wildfires in parts of the UK, was made around 30 times more likely by climate change¹². Scientists now expect 12% of UK summers to experience the same levels of heat. Before global warming, the risk was less than 0.5%¹³



It is no longer enough for us to acknowledge the issue of climate change: we must now act with greater urgency to confront this challenge head-on. It is no longer enough to expect everyone else to change their behaviour or rely upon technology to solve the issue. B&NES is working tirelessly with regional and central government to provide us with tools, powers and resources to achieve our target of being carbon neutral by 2030. The policies and initiatives set out in this plan promote and enable the increased use of active modes of transportation in order to decarbonise our transport system.

¹⁰ Kendon, M. et al. (2015) State of the UK Climate 2014. Met Office, Exeter, UK.

¹¹ Schaller, N. et al. (2016) Human influence on climate in the 2014 southern England winter floods and their impacts. Nature Climate Change

¹² <https://www.carbonbrief.org/met-office-climate-change-made-2018-uk-summer-heatwave-30-times-more-likely/#:~:text=This%20year's%20summer%20heatwave%20dominated,by%20human%2Dcaused%20climate%20change.>

¹³ <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/grantham/publications/climate-change-faqs/what-are-the-impacts-of-climate-change/#:~:text=Scientists%20now%20expect%2012%25%20of,of%20climate%20change%20will%20grow.>

1.5 Historical Context

1.5.1 How did we get here?

Until the 1930s, walking was the most common way for an individual to travel to work. This was primarily due to people living closer to their place of work in combination with a limited number of other affordable transport options. Cycling emerged in the late 19th century primarily as a leisure pursuit for wealthier individuals. Over time, it became popular among the better-off segments of the working class due to its practicality. In the 1930s, around 34% of all trips within our cities were made by bicycle. The availability of affordable bicycles expanded access to potential job opportunities and social activities.

By the late 1940s, cycling in the UK reached its peak, becoming the second most popular commuting mode after buses, accounting for one-fifth of all journeys. As shown in Figure 1.10, from around 1950, though, cycles declined as a mode of transport as motorbikes and private cars gained in popularity. The growth of car usage led to an expansion of car-related infrastructure without a corresponding increase in dedicated cycling infrastructure. As a result, cycling declined until the mid-1970s, at which point its use levelled off. It has fluctuated since and cycling currently accounts for around 2% of all trips.

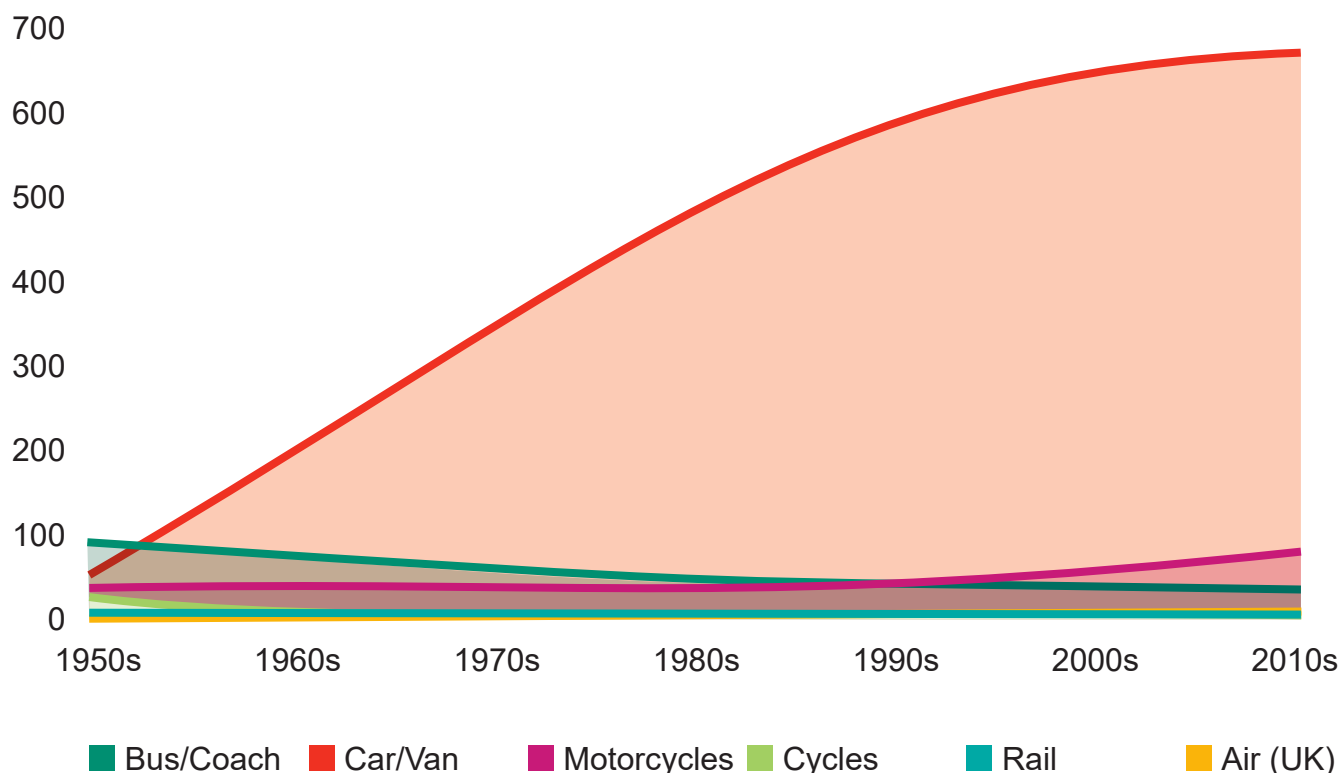


Figure 1.10 Transport in Billion passenger km by mode in the UK since 1952

By 1970, private cars accounted for 77% of all passenger miles in the UK, and this proportion has continued to increase. From the 1960s to the early 2000s, transport policy followed the “predict and provide” principle. This meant estimating future traffic demand and trying to build enough capacity to accommodate it. This approach often dealt with different modes of transport separately and hindered integrated transport planning.

Since the mid-20th century, towns and cities have been shaped by the rise of car ownership and the expansion of road networks. Increased access to cars has resulted in faster travel times, longer commutes, and facilitated the movement of people away from employment centres and leisure services, thanks to cheaper land and housing options. At the same time, cars have made town centres hard to access for those walking, wheeling or cycling.

While the United Kingdom has witnessed an increase in the prevalence of motor vehicles, several European countries have taken a different path. Countries such as the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany have invested heavily in active travel improvements since the 1970s. This long-term commitment to promoting active modes of transportation has resulted in these countries having more extensive networks of dedicated active travel infrastructure. The figure below illustrates the stark difference in the number of cycle routes provided in the Netherlands and Belgium in comparison to England.

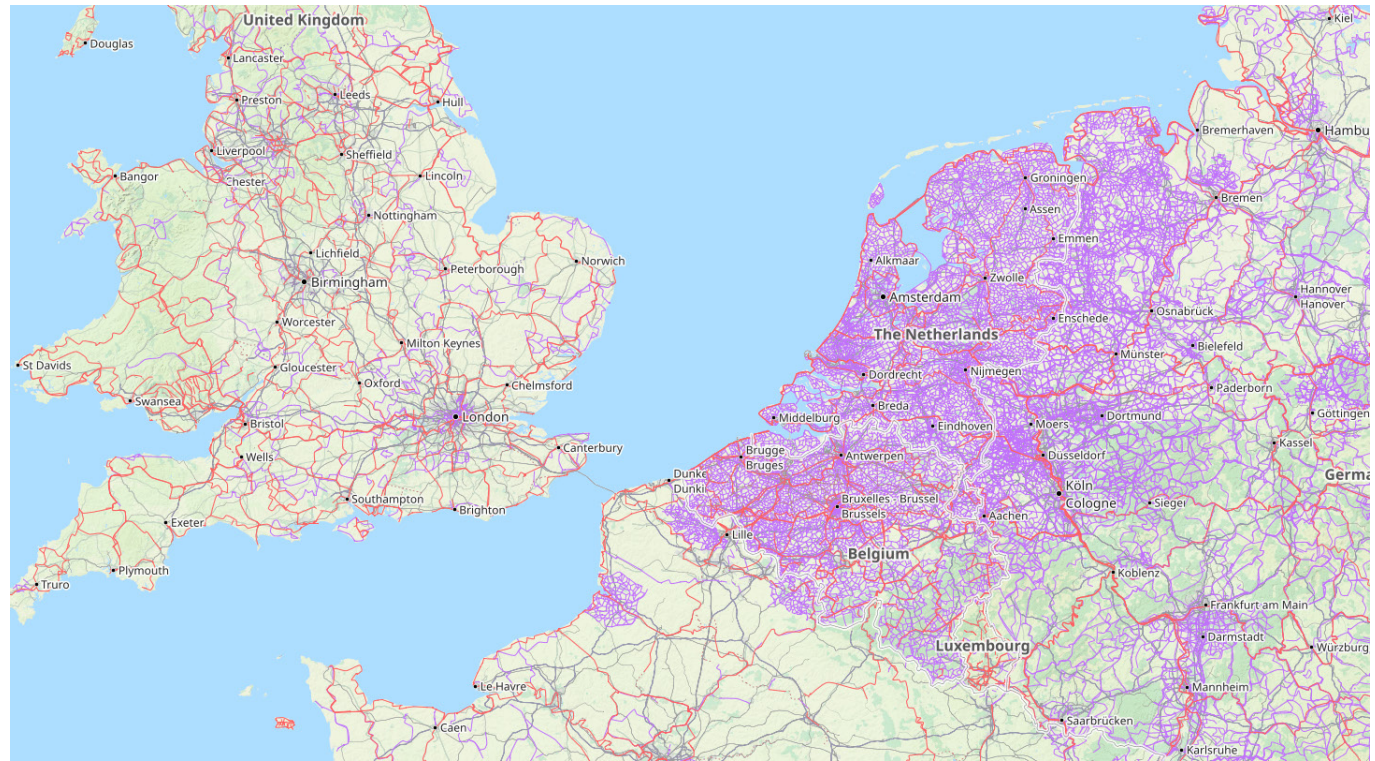


Figure 1.11 Cycle Routes in the UK and Europe¹⁴

¹⁴ <https://www.opencyclemap.org/>

1.6 Scale of the challenge

The scale of the challenge to deliver a comprehensive network of active travel routes cannot be underestimated. It represents a monumental undertaking, requiring significant planning, investment and a shift in societal norms. These challenges arise from the entrenched dominance of vehicles, particularly cars, in our daily lives. As a society we have become heavily dependent on our cars and the freedom they offer us.

As we confront the urgent need to address these environmental challenges associated with the Climate Emergency, it is critical that we transition towards active transport modes. This shift requires a fundamental re-evaluation and rebalancing of our transport network to prioritise active travel options such as walking, wheeling, and cycling.

We are now at a crossroads: our choices today will determine the legacy we leave for future generations. In this masterplan, we acknowledge the past, confront the present, and embrace a future where active travel shapes more sustainable communities.

