



Good infrastructure boosts bike trips to school



At the Conservative Party Conference, Manchester

Left to right: Gareth Buddo/Furmoto Photography, Adam Simms/Paul Halliwood, Cycling UK

U-TURN IF YOU WANT TO...

Back in October at the Conservative Party Conference, the UK government announced its new 'plan for drivers', immediately revoking guidance to local authorities that was intended to encourage them to be bold when designing and delivering cycling and walking schemes.

A government that had in the previous three years introduced excellent new design standards for cycling infrastructure, announced a bold 'Gear Change' vision to deliver the changes needed to get more people walking and cycling, and increased (though not by enough) investment in active travel, had within a few months done a U-turn. It cut dedicated active travel funding by over two thirds; railed against its own policy support for low traffic neighbourhoods; questioned the previous political consensus on 20mph limits; and promised to deliver policies to benefit drivers rather than policies to give people transport choices, including cycling and public transport.

Looked at from a narrow perspective, some of these decisions and proposals only affect England, but the wider mood music matters. A by-election in Uxbridge last summer seems to have convinced

some in politics that it's a vote-winning strategy to oppose measures designed to reduce traffic, to lower speed limits or to enable more people to cycle. That's had implications beyond England, including the unrelenting and inaccurate criticism of bold measures taken in Wales to introduce a default 20mph speed limit on restricted roads. And, within some news outlets, it's also fed into a media narrative which is obsessively negative about cycling or those who cycle.

If you live in Scotland, it will be your politicians in Holyrood who can directly influence the level of funding for cycling, not your Westminster MP. But our election work in 2024 isn't just about the manifesto commitments the political parties make. It's

about galvanising wider political support and building a more positive narrative around the benefits of cycling. That's something that matters wherever you live in the UK.

A REAL GEAR CHANGE?

We will be asking political parties and candidates to support specific cycling demands, and we'll produce a Cycling UK manifesto which, for England, will include a commitment to significantly increase funding for active travel. We've seen the governments in both Scotland and Wales make commitments to reduce levels of motor traffic, acknowledging that carbon reduction targets, increased congestion and air pollution concerns

“ TO GET WIDER POLITICAL SUPPORT, WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF MORE PEOPLE CYCLING ”



Organised ride for the Conservative conference

Left: Adam Simms. Right: Alamy