

Let's Ride Tameside

Strategic Framework for Cycling Activation 2024-2028



Foreword

I want to see stronger, healthier communities in Tameside and this Cycling strategy sets out some of our ambitions for our residents. Cycling can be a joyful activity, a skill for life. In Tameside, we envision a future where cycling is embraced by all as a fun, accessible, and sustainable way to stay fit, boost mental health, and connect with the towns around us.

Encouraging more people to take to two wheels has the potential to reduce illnesses, improve fitness, and improve wellbeing, as well as creating affordable means of travel and recreation. As we promote cycling in Tameside, it is essential that we all recognise our duty to ensure the safety of all road users, especially the most vulnerable, including cyclists and pedestrians. The Highway Code's hierarchy of users reminds us that those who pose the least risk should be given the most protection. As such, everyone has a responsibility to care for one another and share our roads with respect, caution and above all, patience. We must foster an environment where everyone, regardless of how they travel, feels safe. This strategy is aligned with the principles of Vision Zero, an ambitious road safety initiative with the goal of eliminating all fatalities and serious injuries on our roads.

Greater Manchester is committed to realising Vision Zero, and our borough is an active participant in this effort. Whilst we work towards more people feeling safe to ride on our roads, the development of off-road cycling can help shape a positive cycling culture and identity for Tameside. This vision seeks to encourage our residents and visitors to explore our beautiful landscapes, trails and towpaths. It also calls on local businesses to create welcoming places where people who ride can pause to rest and refuel, thus contributing to the local economy, and raising the profile of cycling in our borough.

Together, let's embrace cycling for a healthier, safer, and more vibrant future. Let's ride Tameside.



Councillor Tafheen Sharif
First Deputy (Population Health and Wellbeing)

Introduction

Cycling for outdoor recreation and active travel has the potential to transform how people in Tameside connect with their local environment, each other, and with education and employment. This strategy is primarily health-led, and focussed on supporting individual behaviour change amongst key target audiences. Our key driver is the benefit to physical and mental wellbeing for all through reduced inactivity, cleaner air, economic inclusion and the reduction of poverty that is at the heart of health inequalities. This cycling participation strategy focusses on the steps we can take with people and communities to support more cycling in the borough.

We also recognise the wider benefits to the environment that a reduction in car journeys can help deliver and aim to align with local and regional strategies that are concerned with the impact of transport on the environment. Parallel to this strategy is a further suite of work undertaken via our Strategic Active Travel Group. This brings together the wider agendas from Highways, Infrastructure, Transport, Planning, Education and Community Safety, and is concerned with workstreams around the following topics.

1. **School Travel**
2. **Vision Zero**
3. **Modeshift**
4. **Encouraging use of new infrastructure**

Tameside Cycling Participation Group

Tameside Cycling Participation Group is a health-led cross sector partnership of people and organisations with an interest in growing cycling in our borough. Their collective role is to join up conversations for cycling, and to identify opportunities to connect and optimise resources. The group aims to unblock barriers to cycling, building relevant relationships, and inspiring the incorporation of cycling into wider agendas. It is accountable to the Healthy Places Sub-Group, and the Health and Wellbeing Board. The group's purpose is to;

1. Listen to the cycling community, and help them to be heard, seen, and supported.
2. Work together to offer practical support for Tameside residents to take up, return to, or stay cycling throughout their life.
3. To work across systems and sectors to create the conditions to help more people to cycle more often.
4. Work in synchrony with infrastructure development to make Tameside a place where cycling as a mode of transport is an attractive, realistic, convenient and low risk option.
5. Make Tameside a place where people, friends and families can ride together easily, safely, and with confidence.
6. Highlight great places to ride during leisure time, where cycling can be an enjoyable way to connect with nature. To bring services and communities together to ensure people who ride can do so through clean and attractive routes.
7. Encourage and support local people and businesses to create places where people who ride feel welcome, where their needs are catered for, and where they can find a sense of belonging and community.
8. Celebrate national, regional and local cycling events, and support the development of a positive cycling culture.
9. Pursue the creation of a local cycling 'scene', with the ambition of Tameside becoming a the 'home' of off-road cycling in Greater Manchester.
10. Attract investment for cycling in Tameside.

Partnerships

The Cycling Participation Group is a collaboration between local, regional and national partners concerned with cycling. We have representation from Cycling UK, British Cycling, British Triathlon, regional organisations like Transport for Greater Manchester, and Manchester Bike Kitchen, and local partners with a cycling offer to provide essential resources, training, and advocacy for cyclists at all levels. These partners provide the link into the wider national picture for cycling, and link local partners in with opportunities to develop our offer through data and intelligence, insight, research, network connections and resources.



Regional Opportunities

Our close proximity to the Velodrome offers potential links and opportunities to inspire local young people, and to identify those who might be interested in developing their skills further. As such, we hope to work with relevant partner organisations to make best use of talent pathways and support available to young people, especially girls, to help them break into the sport wherever natural talent and interest is identified.



Local Needs and Opportunities

Our current on-road infrastructure is evolving but is yet to provide the stress free environment needed to encourage widespread cycling. According to IPSOS MORI, Two-thirds (64%) of people agree that it is 'too dangerous to cycle on the roads' including a quarter (26%) who agree strongly¹. Women are much more likely to perceive the dangers of cycling than men, with 71% of women agreeing compared with just 57% of men. Locally, 51% (Healthy Places Consultation 2024) of residents tell us that they do not feel confident or safe travelling by bike in their neighbourhood. Whilst disparity exists between perceptions and reality, we must respect that many people are deterred by busy roads, inconsistent or incomplete cycle lanes, and a lack of physical separation from traffic. As such, this strategy forms the early stages of a journey of activation for cycling that is 'people focussed', intended to encourage and enable more people to ride in environments that they feel safest in first.

We are fortunate to have extensive green infrastructure and miles of trails, towpaths and bridleways on which to ride. The Tame Valley Loop, Pennine Bridleway, and Transpennine Trail offer the perfect backdrop for riders of all abilities, from beginner paths to adrenaline pumping downhills. We intend to start by prioritising off road cycling in our current strategy as a means to appeal to a larger, more diverse audience. By focussing on off-road first we can immediately offer safe,

enjoyable spaces for people of all ages and abilities to cycle without fear. Creating an environment where cycling can thrive will help build confidence and grow our local cycling culture. Over time we intend this to lead to greater safety in numbers of people riding more confidently out on the roads. This foundation will underpin the further development of on-road cycling activity in due course, at a time that is congruent with public feeling and infrastructure maturity.

Fostering a cycling culture requires more than great places to ride. People need support to learn to ride and improve their skills, especially those who didn't have the opportunity to learn in childhood. They also need access to bikes and equipment and have places to store them, irrespective of their living space. Our strategy advocates access to beginner friendly cycling programmes, adapted and inclusive riding opportunities, cycle loans, and affordable equipment and repairs. In doing so we aim to break barriers to cycling down and maximise the number of people riding a bike regularly.

¹ [New survey shows public back action to encourage cycling and public transport but remain attached to their cars | Ipsos](#)



Context

Links with other plans and strategies

National context

- Gear Change - A bold vision for cycling and walking, Dept of Transport
- Moment of Change - Active Travel Guidance for Councils, Sustrans and Dept of Transport
- Uniting The Movement – Sport England.
- Bus Back Better – Dept of Transport
- Sporting Future-gov.uk

Regional context

- GM Active Travel Mission – GM Active Travel Commissioner/TfGM
- GM Moving – Greater Sport - Physical Activity Plan
- GM Population Health Plan – Public Health
- GM Streets for All
- GM Infrastructure Framework
- GM Air Quality Action Plan
- GM Transport Strategy
- GM Vision Zero
- GM School Travel Strategy (under consultation)

Tameside Context

- Tameside Corporate Plan 2024-2027
- JSNA Summary of Health and Wellbeing 2024/25
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Locality Plan 2023-28
- Healthy Places Strategic Framework for Action 2024-2028
- Tameside Moving Strategic Framework for Action 2024-2028

Changing Behaviours in Tameside

Increasing cycling participation in Tameside requires significant behaviour change, much of which is dependent on the macro-environmental factors being driven at a regional level through Greater Manchester Combined Authority. Behaviour change at a local level can be enabled through wider agendas, but we recognise that some barriers will be unlocked when the wider system matures in the coming years.

Where we talk about access with regards to behaviour change, this includes the availability of infrastructure as a means to create opportunities to ride-making cycling as a whole accessible.

With regards to our strategic objectives for this group, 'Access' refers specifically to an actual bike. This strategy does not assume responsibility for delivery against infrastructure development.

Capability (Skills and Confidence, Safety and Safety Campaigns, Communication and Navigation)

Training and opportunities to improve skills and confidence to ride, resources for navigation, safety guidance, maintenance workshops.

Opportunity (Access)

Access to a bike, either owned or borrowed. Access to safety equipment. Access to safe and convenient infrastructure to ride on. Support for organisations to create ancillary facilities for staff and clients to use a bike to connect.

Motivation (Celebration)

Linking to social connections through cycling, enjoyable events, and peer support.



Strategic Objectives for Action

1. Access

According to Cycling UK 42% of British people own or have access to a bike. Of residents with low incomes in the UK only 37% have access to a bike, compared to 60% of those in managerial and professional occupations. Activation of cycling must therefore address the fact that more than half of the people in Tameside do not own or have access to a bike. This can be for several reasons, from economic exclusion and affordability, to lack of storage space in terraced houses and high-rise flats, and more. A significant proportion of our strategy is to find alternative means to give residents access to affordable bikes through a range of ownership and hire/loan options.

Objective 1

To increase the number of people able to hire, borrow, own, or hire purchase a bike at an affordable rate.

Key Priorities

- Increase the number of people accessing affordable bikes to own
- Support the growth of community bike libraries
- Promote business to sign up to cycle schemes and bike to work
- Support Dr Bike sessions in schools, encouraging bike sales and swaps.

Strategic Objectives for Action

2. Building Skills and Confidence

Whilst many people learn to ride a bike in childhood, this is not true for everyone. Many children and adults have never ridden a bike, don't know how, and do not have someone to teach them. We can open cycling up to those who haven't had the chance to learn through their existing networks by creating community-based initiatives to connect those who want to learn to those who are able to teach them.

Most people, whether they know how to ride or not, do not know how to service or maintain a bike. At best this means bikes can fall quickly out of use and end up abandoned when small problems occur, at worst it can mean bikes become unsafe to ride, and can result in avoidable accident and injury, and bikes being abandoned in public places. We can keep more people pedalling by growing individual and community capacity to maintain bikes to a safe standard, and will tap the resources available to create spaces, places and initiatives to do so.

Objective 2

To increase individual and community capacity to ride competently, confidently, and where appropriate, competitively, on well-maintained bikes.

Key Priorities

- Have a children and young people's offer for cycling, including Bikeability in schools
- Support community and service-led initiatives to teach adults to ride
- Support community and service-led initiatives to build and maintain bikes
- Support ride leader development and peer-led learn to ride initiatives.

Strategic Objectives for Action

3. Safety and Safety Campaigns

Safety is the most important aspect of any work we undertake in the achievement of our ambitions for cycling. We will ensure that parity of respect between all road users, and the safe sharing of space is at the forefront of our work. We will continually challenge the damaging ‘them and us’ culture between those who ride and those who drive and will endeavour to humanise both the rider and the person behind the wheel at all times.

We will engage with national and regional campaigns to locally uplift those that are evidence based and well resourced. We will work with an asset-based approach, celebrating positive road sharing behaviours, and reinforcing the perception that considerate and courteous behaviour is both the expectation and the norm.

Objective 3

To continually reinforce the joint responsibility to protect ourselves and each other when sharing spaces for wheeling, walking and driving. To give meaningful local support to uplift evidence based national and regional campaigns. To support programmes of education, and the dissemination of safe road sharing information amongst key target audiences.

Key Priorities

- Work across sectors/Directorates to uplift well researched and resourced campaigns (e.g. Vision Zero, Think! And Cycling UK campaigns), and the Highway Code’s hierarchy of vulnerable road users for road safety/safe road sharing through local channels
- Promote free resources for cycle safety courses through partner organisations (e.g. Cycling UK, TfGM)
- To promote/support the uptake of Safe Urban Driver, Driving for Better Business and Safer Driving for Longer training locally where applicable
- To work in partnership with Greenspace, Community Safety, Enforcement, GMP, and local communities to tackle litter, dog fouling, and anti-social behaviour on cycle routes.

Strategic Objectives for Action

4. Communication/Navigation

The level of skills and experience of the person who rides the bike can determine how and where they access information on where to ride. Likewise, the purpose of the journey can influence the route and where and how to plan it. We will ensure that navigating the cycle ways of Tameside is available in appropriate formats for both novices and expert riders alike. We aim to promote, create and disseminate a variety of resources from digital and online, printed media, simple videos, and word of mouth/social media to ensure people of all ages, abilities and cultures can find their way around our local networks.

Objective 4

To ensure that those who want to cycle know how and where to access the information to find routes for sport, utility, and leisure, in a format that is accessible and understandable for their level of need/experience. To ensure that those who don't yet know they want to cycle come across information to inspire them in a range of community settings.

Key Priorities

- To work with the cycling community to promote local routes through partner communications channels
- To support new riders to access routes digitally e.g. via GPX files, or through videos and alternatives to maps
- To attend and convene local events, and create opportunities for cycling knowledge to be exchanged with the public by word of mouth
- To signpost to led rides.

Strategic Objectives for Action

5. Celebration/Culture Shift

Raising the profile of cycling in Tameside is an important way to inspire people, especially children and young people, to take part. We have an opportunity to do this by celebrating regional, national and international events at a local level, especially those that pass through our borough. This means creating local events and activities that chime with key races and sports, and that tie with relevant themes, such as celebrating women in cycling.

We also wish to celebrate our natural and built assets such as Hartshead Pike and Werneth Low, and the routes that make Tameside a place that attracts people to ride, like the Trans Pennine Trail, Pennine Bridle Way and the Tame Valley Loop, and many more miles of waterside routes. We also wish to grow the touristic appeal of Tameside, to create bike friendly towns, with cafes and businesses that welcome riders.

Objective 5

To inspire local children and young people to ride by marking the annual calendar of cycling events, to raise the profile of cycle sport and local role models through community/school active challenges. To grow the local cycling culture and tourist appeal in partnership with people, organisations and businesses, through events and infrastructure that celebrate local routes, and the natural features of Tameside's landscape.

Key Priorities

- To support a calendar of international, national and regional cycling events and forward plan activities where it speaks to strategic priorities e.g. women's cycling
- To support the creation of mass participation events, and achieve regular 'Cycle Sundays' family and inclusive rides on traffic free infrastructure such as parks, off-road routes, or closed roads
- Identify local built and natural cycling assets and promote them in communications to attract people to the borough
- To bring local hospitality businesses together with cyclists to understand what constitutes a 'cyclists welcome' stop, and to support them to recognise the economic benefits of catering for this clientele.

Inclusion

In line with our corporate plan Our People Our Place Our Plan, and our physical activity strategy Moving Tameside; more people, more active, more often, we wish to apply a proportionate universal approach to cycling activation. Our objective is to improve wellbeing for our least active residents through cycling and related activities. This means focussing our greatest efforts to activate cycling amongst the most under-represented groups, and those with the greatest level of health need related to physical inactivity. This is concerned with making cycling and the related benefits available to those who are most likely to be inactive. This includes;

Objective 6

To ensure those who are least active and most under-represented are prioritised for support to access cycling for sport, utility and leisure.

Key Priorities

- Adults and children in the least affluent households (including workless adults)
- Those with a limiting illness or disability
- Our racially minoritised communities
- Those aged 55-74



Cycling Accessibility Policy

In Tameside, our riding routes include canal towpaths. Many are 200 years old, and form an integral part of our local heritage and culture. They were designed for a horse to pull a boat and were never intended for public access. The Canals and Rivers Trust is responsible for our waterside networks, and recognises that, towpaths and routes along the Tame, Etherow, Medlock and Goyt rivers form the backbone of cycling, walking and wheeling networks, yet due to their age and original purpose, accessibility can be an issue. Infrastructure including chicanes, A frames and kissing gates are commonplace. This negatively impacts those who use adapted bikes, including those for people with a disability, people who favour trikes for cultural purposes, people towing child carriers, as well as limiting other access for walking and wheeling (people with double buggies, mobility scooters, cargo, e-bikes and trishaws, and wheelchairs).

The Canals and Rivers Trust has created a Towpaths for Everyone Policy², which outlines a commitment to the systematic removal of unnecessary physical barriers.

We consider that this approach represents best practice in line with the Equalities Act 2010, and advocate to follow suit on all other cycling, walking and wheeling routes, wherever practical and possible.

² [Towpaths for Everyone](#)



E-Bikes

When considering accessibility of cycling in Tameside, we should also consider the topography of the borough. To the east, we border the Pennines and Saddleworth Moor offering hilly and rugged terrain that provides dramatic views and challenging rides, and to the west we have flatter, more urbanised areas and commuter connection to Manchester. The event of E-bikes means people can access more challenging routes, or achieve longer distances than before, supporting those for whom physical ability and stamina may be more challenging. As such finding ways to increase accessibility of e-bikes, some of which can be prohibitively expensive, could potentially unlock a gateway to participation for more people, including those outlines above.



Tameside Cycling Participation Approach

The Cycling Participation Approach was co-designed with cycling partners to acknowledge how the wider system determines an individual's ability to ride a bike. It provides thematic workstreams for partners to unite around and provides an approach on which to clearly hang our action plan, which can be seen [here](#). It acknowledges the importance of organisations and institutions, most notably workplaces and education settings as places that can support and enable cycling and wider active travel. It also considers that how cycling participation is activated depends on age and ability, and that where someone is in their life course is relevant. Likewise, it recognises the importance and value of the third sector, community voices, and local businesses in growing the cycling scene. It also highlights that the responsibility for creating safe cycling in Tameside is shared.



Road Cycling and Cycle Sport

Tameside and the surrounding hills provide a conducive environment for road cyclists to train; improving cardiovascular fitness and endurance through our challenging topography. Our local landscape, with steep inclines to the East and up into the Pennines provides an attractive backdrop for rides, with the potential for rewarding views and downhill pay offs.

A number of local cycling clubs meet regularly in the borough, providing support, guidance, and regular led rides, helping cyclists navigate the terrain with confidence and camaraderie. We can encourage more residents to embrace road cycling as part of a healthy, active lifestyle by raising the profile of local clubs, signposting to them, and by celebrating and supporting road cycling events that pass through our borough.

Our local clubs are key assets, with passionate and enthusiastic members supporting each other, and advocating for cycling development. Moving forward, we will work closely with these partners to establish a unified 'voice of cycling' in Tameside, linking them with resources and support, and ensuring decision-makers listen to and act on the needs of the cycling community to grow the appeal of cycling in and through our borough.



Our Long-Term Ambition

Our borough has the unique opportunity to establish itself as the destination for off-road cycling in Greater Manchester. With its wealth of natural green spaces, diverse terrain, and challenging hills, we are perfectly positioned to attract riders from Tameside and beyond. Our trails and off-road routes showcase potential for exhilarating mountain biking, offering challenges for skilled riders, whilst also catering for families and beginners seeking safe, accessible and traffic free routes. To realise this vision our strategy will focus on three key areas;

1. Infrastructure
2. Inclusivity
3. Reputation

1. Infrastructure

We will work with the cycling community to grow knowledge of off-road routes and enhance existing trails to meet high standards. This will include creating bike friendly hubs, with support from local hospitality to welcome riders, offer secure parking, maintenance stations, and in due course, bike rental opportunities. We will pursue the growth of cycling assets to learn to ride, to increase people's skills and ability to access off-road cycling.

2. Inclusivity

We aim to make cycling available and accessible to everyone, regardless of age, ability and personal circumstances. We will support free or low-cost access to equipment, publicise beginner friendly routes, places to ride, and people to ride with. We will signpost to local organisations, groups and individuals to ensure all residents feel empowered to join the off-road community.

3. Reputation

We will work to position our borough as a recognised cycling destination through events, partnerships and promotions. This will include shaping and building a brand and creating a user-led online presence for Tameside cycling. We will encourage people to showcase the places they have ridden and share their experiences, inspiring people to visit the home of off-road cycling in Greater Manchester.

Governance and Measuring Success

The Health and Wellbeing Board is a statutory committee that oversees the Healthy Places Strategic Framework, which supports Tameside's Cycling Participation Strategy. Tameside's Cycling Participation Strategy builds on the Healthy Places Strategic Framework and will be overseen by, and accountable to the Health and Wellbeing Board. Tameside Cycling Participation Group Governance Priorities:

- To develop a strong collaborative partnership with member organisations that share cycling priorities
- To develop and maintain positive relationships with stakeholders across the cycling and active travel system, including the Tameside Active Travel Steering Group
- Provide regular updates to the Healthy Places Sub-Group and an annual report to the Health and Wellbeing Board
- To participate in the delivery of Sport England Place Partner work where cycling is the focus
- Oversee the delivery of funded cycling and walking Activation work (TfGM)
- Support the GM Moving Strategy in locality

How will we know when we have been successful?

- The Active Lives Survey will help us understand trends in cycling
- TfGM travel surveys will demonstrate an upward trend in cycling
- Cycling and Active Travel will feature in more strategies, policies and practices in local organisations and institutions through our strategic influence and advocacy.
- Local clubs and facilities will report increased diversity in membership through our support on creating inclusive policies and practice.
- Community capacity will be increased through targeted investment and support
- Place based cycling activity opportunities will increase through the development of 'social scaffolding' through partnership working
- More case studies and community stories from real people will show engaging in cycling has delivered tangible benefits to physical, mental, and social health