

# The Active Travel debate:

the East of England's views

A NEW  
**WINTER**  
APPROACH



**Attendees at the recent A New Winter Approach Peterborough event had the chance to engage in an insightful active travel debate during an interactive workshop session. In this lively discussion, participants explored the various benefits and drawbacks of active travel, as well as their ideal active travel schemes.**

Although the potential environmental and health benefits of choosing active travel over motor transportation are clear, many of the winter maintenance practitioners in attendance acknowledged the potential challenges of incorporating active travel into daily life, such as the need for better infrastructure and safety measures, as well as the obvious budgetary constraints.

The attendees discussed ways to make active travel more accessible and enjoyable. Ideas included creating safe and inviting paths for cyclists and pedestrians, as well as providing incentives to encourage more people to choose active travel including investing in safe cycle storage hubs. The attendees also discussed the importance of supporting local businesses that promote active travel, such as bike shops.

Many attendees were running current projects and schemes surrounding active travel, however the size and scale of these differed across the local authorities, mainly as a result of budgets. For some local authorities in attendance, there were no plans to implement active travel schemes – raising concerns of cross-border differences.

One attendee commented that although the schemes were implemented, keeping them treated during the winter months was a challenge. Although the local authority had a budget for maintaining footbridges, cycle ways did not receive the same treatment due to accessibility issues with gritting vehicles.



One of the biggest beneficiaries of the Government's active travel budget is London which has seen vast improvements to active travel thanks to investments of over £1 billion. Waltham Forest's 'Mini Holland' scheme brought a fundamental change to the way active travel is managed, with 34km of segregated cycleways leading to changes across the borough, with the removal of roads and street furniture to make way for cyclists. This investment demonstrates a strong active travel 'success story' as it changed the very fabric of how people live and travel within the borough.

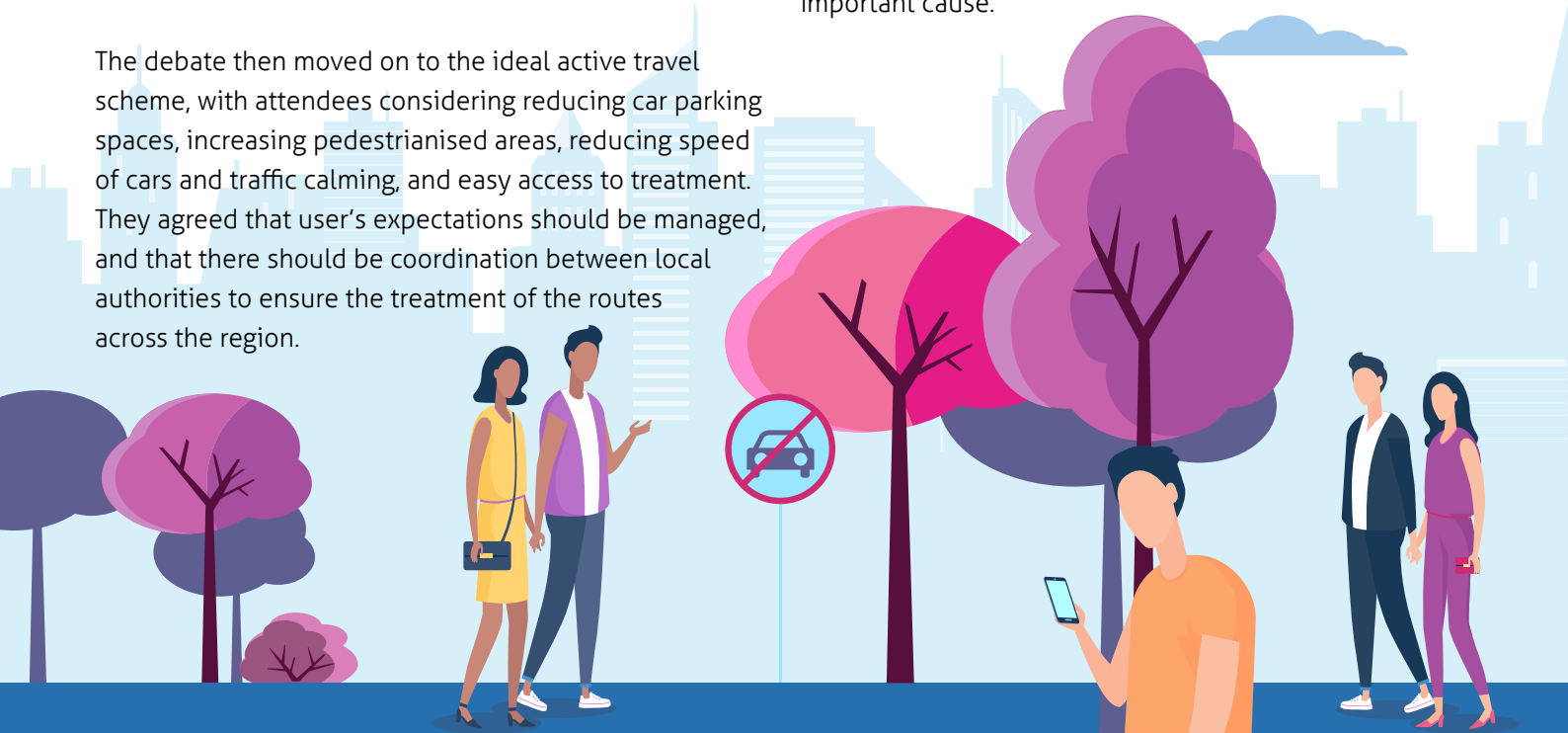
This major change led the discussion nicely into barriers such as funding, political and social buy in, and access to equipment. It was highlighted that Walthamstow residents initially protested an active travel scheme, however, with the right promotion and marketing, residents were convinced of the benefits that active travel brings. A study has since found that active travel has a positive effect on health, with people in Waltham Forest 'theoretically' living longer thanks to the newly implemented schemes.

The debate then moved on to the ideal active travel scheme, with attendees considering reducing car parking spaces, increasing pedestrianised areas, reducing speed of cars and traffic calming, and easy access to treatment. They agreed that user's expectations should be managed, and that there should be coordination between local authorities to ensure the treatment of the routes across the region.



Finally, the importance of evidence-based decision making was noted, as well as the need for up-to-date mapping of cycleways, surface types being taken into consideration, and consideration of the right equipment for the job.

Ultimately, the active travel debate showcased the potential of this form of transportation to reduce environmental pollution, improve public health, and create vibrant communities. It is clear that active travel is an important part of the future of transportation, and the attendees are at the forefront of promoting this important cause.



## Join the debate

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