

CHANGE YOUR WORLD ONE MILE AT A TIME

Sustrans



Source: Sustrans

As the leading sustainable transport charity in England and the UK, Sustrans envisions a world where people can choose to travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment.

Sustrans is a practical charity, working on real projects with real results. They work on innovative and imaginative solutions to the transport challenges that affect everyone, every day, such as the Safe Routes to Schools programme and the National Cycle Network. Daniel Black, Liveable Neighbourhoods Officer, tells us more about them:

What does "sustainable development" mean to you?

In general, **truly sustainable development should balance economic, social and environmental objectives so that one does not jeopardize the other.** At the moment, it's out of balance, and economic growth is still being pushed up the agenda ahead of social and environmental sustainability.

Why do you support Every Action Counts?

Grassroots activism is hugely important. If Every Action Counts is successful, it could be a very, very important program. It has the potential to be hugely influential. That's why we're supporting it.

You work with the Sustrans Liveable Neighbourhoods team. Tell me about it.

Our team implements practical projects that combine urban design, community involvement and sustainable transport planning. **We're just starting up a new 3 year project called DIY Streets. The aim is to show in 10 pilot streets around Britain that community-led street design does not need to be expensive to have a significant effect on the speed of motor traffic, to make streets more attractive, and even to encourage people to use more sustainable modes of transport.** Due to the generosity of Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, we're able to offer this service at a very low relative cost.

What's the importance of DIY Streets?

Fear of motor traffic traveling too fast has become a problem of pandemic proportions, resulting in a generation of children who are not allowed to walk or cycle to school and adults who choose

unhealthy, polluting modes of transport even for short journeys. The sheer volume of motor traffic has effectively banned our use of urban streets.

In the first half of this decade, the central government made moves to combat this problem, using a variety of methods to re-prioritise away from the private motor car and back again towards the pedestrian and cyclist, and these were largely successful in terms of improving street environment and slowing traffic, but at a cost of anywhere between £1-2.5 million.

The high cost of changing existing streets to a home zone design is the problem we're trying to tackle. We will not be able to rip up streets and re-pave them; instead, **we will work closely with local communities to use certain simple ideas such as introducing chicanes and reducing sightlines by rearranging the parking or putting in immovable planters. We estimate this might cost as little as £20,000 per street.** From this project, we aim to produce a toolkit or guidance document to be used by other communities to help them do the same. If the pilot is successful, we hope to roll it out nationally.



Photo of street in Barton Hill, Bristol (Source: Barton Hill Revisited, Tempus Publishing)

How does DIY Streets fit into your community-based work?

The whole point is ensuring the community has a voice. Our experience in facilitating the extensive community involvement process and initial designs of the Dings home zone in Bristol proved to us both that community involvement lies at the heart of design of the public realm, but also that we as advisors are only able to do so much. **Without a really good community champion and a good community group effectively behind them, this isn't going to happen.** Each of our DIY Streets projects will succeed or fail depending on the level of enthusiasm of local residents, and this process will be made either easy or difficult depending on the support of their local authority.

Does Sustrans have internal environmental policies?

Yeah, we do, and we're continually developing them. We've always had little things going on. **Sustainable transport is our focus, so we monitor how people travel to work. We don't have any parking spaces, so almost all our staff walk, cycle or take public transport to get to work.** We had photo-voltaic cells installed on our roof last year, we've switched energy supplier and bank. We're now composting our biodegradable rubbish, using non-toxic detergents, and otherwise constantly monitoring and trying to improve our ecological footprint.

What's next for Sustrans?

Well, for Liveable Neighbourhoods, we'll have to see in 3 years' time. If enough of the 10 pilot streets are successful, we'll need to generate more interest and funding for the national programme...well, anything can happen, but we're optimistic.

Facts

- DIY Streets is part funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. The foundation has provided £273,000 for 3.5 years.
- Every year Sustrans spends a staggering £1.3 million looking after the 323 miles of the National Cycle Network which the charity owns. The charity receives no government or lottery funding for this vital maintenance work so the money has to come directly from Sustrans.

Further Resources

- Further information about Sustrans, including details about online route mapping, is available from their website: www.sustrans.org.uk