

MEDIA RELEASE

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Surge in Cycle to Work scheme participants shows British are shifting their transport habits

- The number of bikes being obtained through the Cycle to Work scheme more than doubled in June this year compared to 2019.
- Leading providers of the scheme are now calling on the government to expand the successful salary sacrifice scheme to include self-employed workers.
- A new survey conducted by the Cycle to Work Alliance highlights its effectiveness in getting people to ditch polluting methods of transport and get active by cycling to work.

The number of employees joining the Cycle to Work scheme has more than doubled as commuters make plans for returning to the workplace, amid growing concerns about the safety of using public transport as lockdown eases. New data from the Cycle to Work Alliance shows that in June there was a more than 120% increase in the number of people joining the scheme compared to the previous year. This built on a 52% increase in scheme participation in May 2020, compared to the previous year.

The surge of employees wanting to access the scheme, which allows commuters to obtain bicycles and cycling equipment tax free through salary sacrifice, shows many people are actively preparing to embrace cycling as more of the UK prepares to come out of lockdown.

This comes following the landmark announcement from the Transport Secretary of a £2bn package to help increase cycling and walking capacity, and calls from the Prime Minister for more workers to take-up cycling and ensure they get to work as safely as possible as lockdown measures are gradually lifted.

37,754 employees obtained a bike through the scheme in June 2020 compared to 17,071 in June 2019. In May 2020 26,300 people joined the scheme, compared to 17,300 in May 2019.

The Cycle to Work Alliance, made up of the leading cycling providers, is now calling for the government to support this shift towards cycling and help more people get back to work by extending the scheme to include the self-employed.

Adrian Warren, Chair of the Cycle to Work Alliance, said:

“UK workers are ready to embrace cycling like never before. As lockdown measures ease, we want the scheme to support as many people as possible to return to work safely. Already we have seen that the scheme is the natural option for employees wanting to get to work safely.

“We warmly welcome the Government’s acknowledgment of the scheme as a key pillar of their strategy for keeping employees safe on their return to work, and their £250 million investment in temporary cycling infrastructure to support cycling to work.

“That’s why we’re calling on government to widen access to the scheme for self-employed workers. This will ensure more people can actively travel to work and help avoid a spike in people commuting by car or overcrowded public transport after lockdown. Like employees, the self-employed often need to travel to work, and bike should be the default option for many people.

“We should be doing all we can to encourage the significant shift towards cycling that’s taking place across the country and widening the scheme to include self-employed workers is such a simple, easy solution.”

The Alliance’s call has today been backed by IPSE (the Association of Independent Professionals and the Self-Employed), who represent the self-employed.

Andy Chamberlain, Director of Policy at IPSE (the Association of Independent Professionals and the Self-Employed), said:

“Extending the Cycle to Work scheme to the self-employed would be a timely change. Many self-employed people are currently considering the return to work after lockdown but remain concerned about the health risks of using public transport to get there. The cycle to work scheme will be just the solution many are looking for to help them get back to business. It will not only benefit them, but the economy and the environment too.”

The Alliance’s 2020 survey of the scheme’s users and employers highlighted the role the scheme was already playing pre-Covid-19 to encourage people to switch their commute to cycling:

- Six in ten users said they would drive to work if they didn’t use the scheme.
- Since joining, two thirds of scheme users are cycling more than they were before.
- The scheme encourages people from all backgrounds to get cycling. More than seven in ten participants are basic rate taxpayers, and a third of scheme users are over fifty years old.
- Three in ten scheme users said they were considering purchasing an e-bike through the scheme in the future. Greater access to e-bikes mean that more people can benefit from active travel, including older workers, those who live further from their place of work, and disabled cyclists.
- The scheme is helping businesses of all sizes to support their employees with more active lifestyles by cycling to work. Six in ten employers offering the scheme are SMEs (and employ less than 250 people).

Adrian Warren added: “The survey results show the scheme is a proven mechanism at getting more people to cycle to work. We’re continuing to work closely with the government to ensure active travel is an option for as many people as possible, and we’re supporting employers up and down the country to offer the scheme to their staff.”

ENDS

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Notes to editors:

1. The Cycle to Work Alliance (C2WA) is a coalition of the four largest providers of the Cycle to Work Scheme (Cycle Scheme, Cycle Solutions, Evans Cycles and Halfords). Together, we represent around 80 per cent of the market and, since our formation in 2007, have worked closely with government to maximise and promote the Scheme’s benefits.
2. The C2WA conducted a survey of employees using the scheme and employers offering the scheme in January and February 2020. In total, the survey received 4,331 responses from scheme users, and 542 responses from employers.