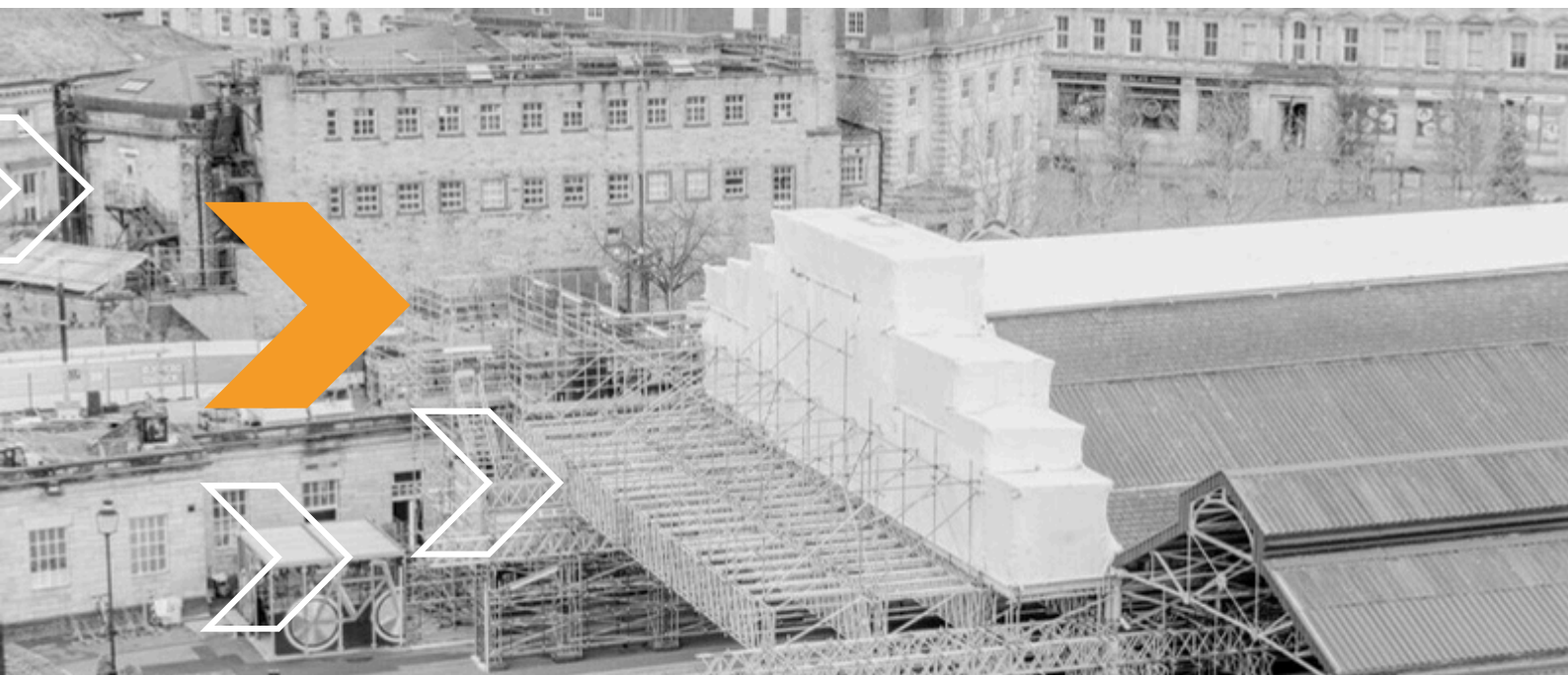




WALK >
> **WHEEL**
RIDE >

First Mile Last Mile Project

Active Travel and Multimodal Engagement



Funded by:



With support from:



West
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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Funded by the Transpennine Route Upgrade, EPIKS delivered a year-long engagement project in Huddersfield, Kirklees, aimed at encouraging greater use of active travel and multimodal journeys, with a particular focus on access to and from Huddersfield Train Station.

As well as providing free activities to support active travel uptake, a core element of the project was the use of the Commonplace digital engagement platform. This enabled residents to contribute structured feedback on walking, cycling and wheeling routes, as well as mapping specific problematic locations.

The project supported people to:

- Walk, cycle and wheel more confidently within the town
- Combine active travel with rail journeys
- Identify and overcome barriers to using active modes
- Influence future improvements by sharing lived experience

Engagement Approach and Activities Delivered

To complement digital and in-person engagement, EPIKS delivered a programme of practical, inclusive and confidence-building activities, ensuring that feedback was grounded in real-world experience and accessible to a wide range of people.

When asked what would help them cycle rather than drive to the train station, one participant said:

“Clearer cycle routes into the station from the ring road”

Route Mapping and Filming

Mapping was identified as a key priority within this project as many people noted that clearer maps, routes and signposting alongside safer routes into the town centre would help to increase cycling confidence. On our Commonplace survey 40% of people noted that route planning, mapping and better signage would help.

To reduce lack of knowledge of routes as a barrier, EPIKS worked with participants and mapping experts to:

- Map commonly used walking, cycling and wheeling routes
- Identify barriers and pinch points
- Film routes showing someone cycling the route to provide a visual guide to the real-life experience. This helps build confidence in how the routes feel in practice, rather than solely relying on maps or plans.
- Create a cycle map showing key routes in and out of Huddersfield avoiding perceived barriers to reaching the train station such as the ring road.

The cycling videos have been promoted through our walk, wheel, ride (WWR) website, social media and through the organisations featured on the map. Digital posters with QR codes linking to the online videos are displayed at Huddersfield train station. The physical maps have been delivered to key businesses and organisations within Huddersfield where they will be a key resource for any staff wanting to travel independently into the town centre.

Instructor-led Test Rides (E-bikes and E-cargo Bikes)

Short introductory and longer supervised test rides gave people the opportunity to try:

- E-bikes for longer or hilly journeys
- E-cargo bikes for carrying children or goods

This addressed common barriers around physical effort, confidence and feasibility, especially relevant for journeys to transport hubs such as Huddersfield train station.



Dr Bike and Maintenance Workshops

Pop-up Dr Bike (free professional bike check and maintenance) and DIY maintenance lessons helped people:

- Keep bikes safe and roadworthy
- Build basic maintenance skills
- Reduce cost barriers associated with cycling

This responded directly to survey comments highlighting lack of confidence in maintaining modern bikes and e-bikes.

Led Walks from the Train Station

Guided walks helped participants:

- Discover quieter, more pleasant routes, including access to key amenities and green spaces
- Build confidence navigating the town centre
- Experience walking routes to and from key destinations, including transport links

These walks also acted as informal spaces for discussion about barriers such as traffic, surface quality and personal safety.



Accessibility

Working with Experience Community (a not-for-profit Community Interest Company that helps physically disabled people enjoy the benefits of outdoor and green spaces), we delivered a six week wheelchair skills course to support those using a wheelchair to feel more confident whilst navigating routes within Huddersfield. The course ran alongside other support for those using wheelchairs, mobility scooters, buggies and other aids to:

- Identify accessible routes
- Plan journeys avoiding barriers
- Share detailed feedback on dropped kerbs, pavement quality and obstructions

This ensured that accessibility issues were embedded throughout the project rather than treated as a separate issue.



Information, Signposting and Engagement

Public engagement online and in person delivered high quality information and signposting through:

- A dedicated website showcasing up-to-date information on Active Travel within Kirklees including information on local walking and cycling groups, blogs focusing on accessibility and how-to guides.
- Supporting residents to access local cycle training opportunities, helping build confidence, skills and awareness, particularly for people who were interested in cycling more but felt unsafe or inexperienced.
- Engaging with key stakeholders and businesses within Huddersfield to provide bespoke information to support employers and their employees.

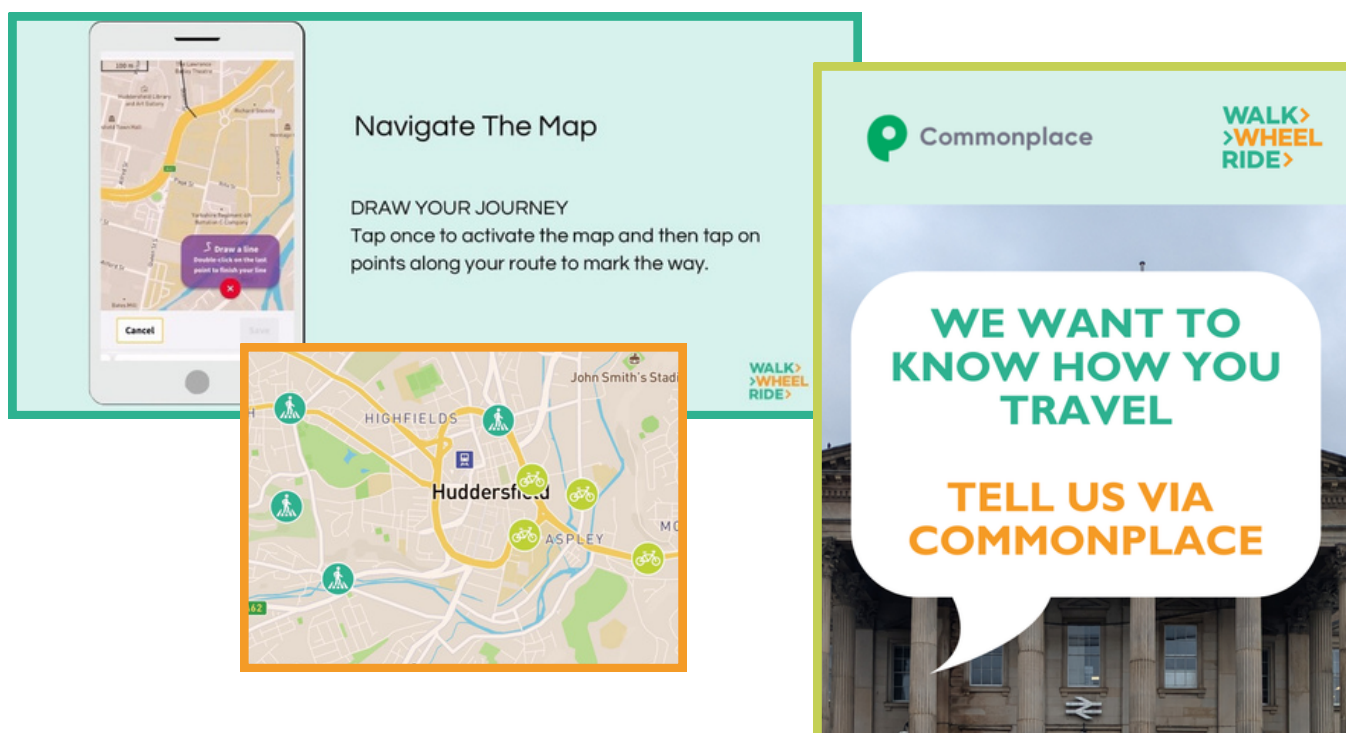


Use of Commonplace and Public Engagement

Public engagement was done both in-person and online through using a platform called Commonplace which used surveys to gather both quantitative and qualitative data, including:

- Walking, cycling and wheeling surveys
- An interactive map for pinpointing specific issues
- Open comments capturing lived experience

This approach allowed people to engage online and in their own time and within an accessible format, with the ability to highlight exact locations that affect their journeys.



EPIKS promoted the Commonplace survey through several different means including; social media, website, email campaign, targeting existing community groups, promotion to businesses and public engagement events as well as using targeted ads and a prize draw to increase survey participants.

However, we found that in-person public engagement often delivered a richer response and more accurate feedback, with the digital platform delivering far fewer responses than we had anticipated despite being shared widely with Huddersfield's residents.

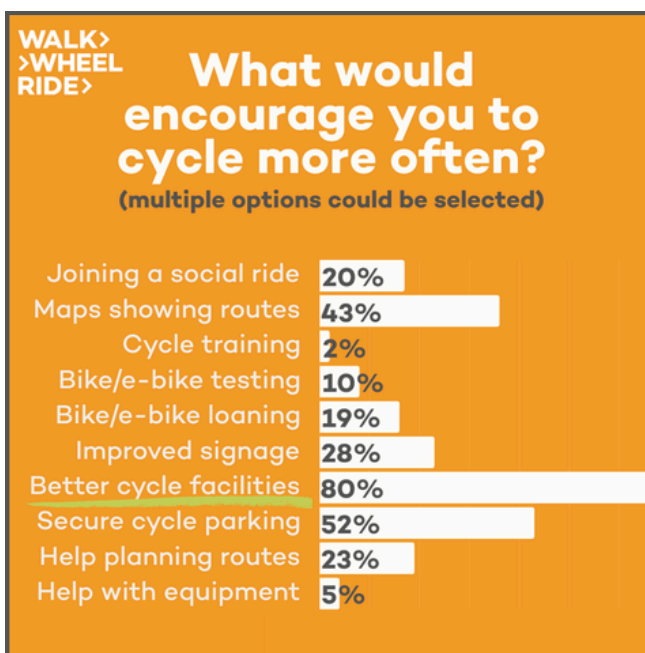
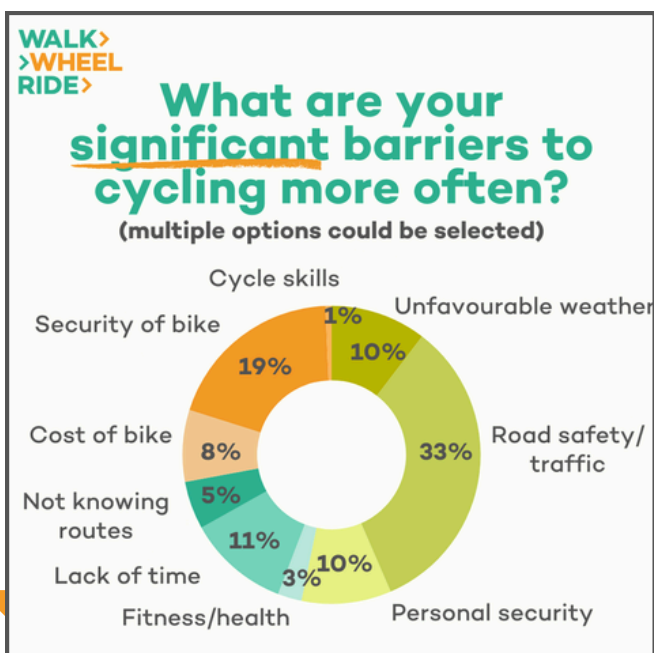
In-person engagement delivered much richer and more accurate feedback than anticipated.

Key Findings Across All Modes

Key findings from cycling survey

The survey indicates that cycling is not an everyday activity for most respondents, with over half cycling two days a week or less and daily cycling being uncommon. Compared with walking, cycling is undertaken more occasionally and appears to be highly dependent on specific situations rather than routine travel. Despite these low participation levels, there is a strong latent demand for cycling: 78% of respondents reported that they would like to cycle more often. This highlights a clear disconnect between interest and actual behaviour, suggesting that low cycling levels are not driven by a lack of motivation, but by external barriers that make cycling feel impractical or unsafe for many people.

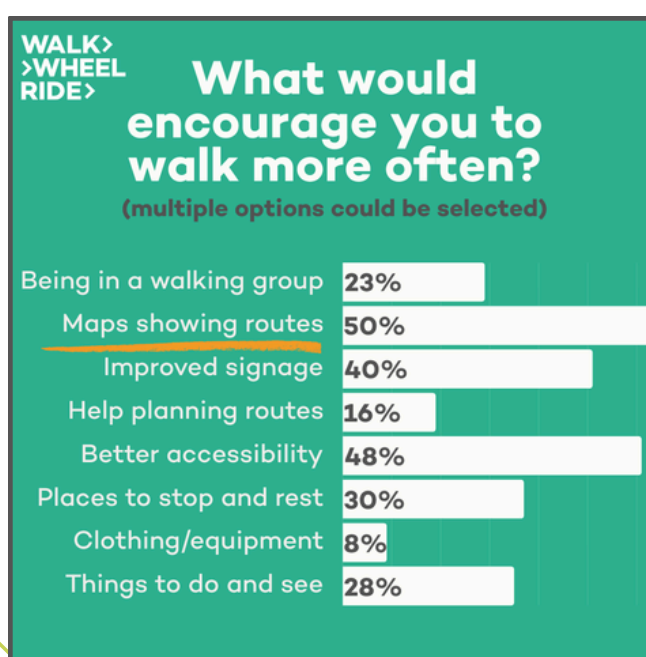
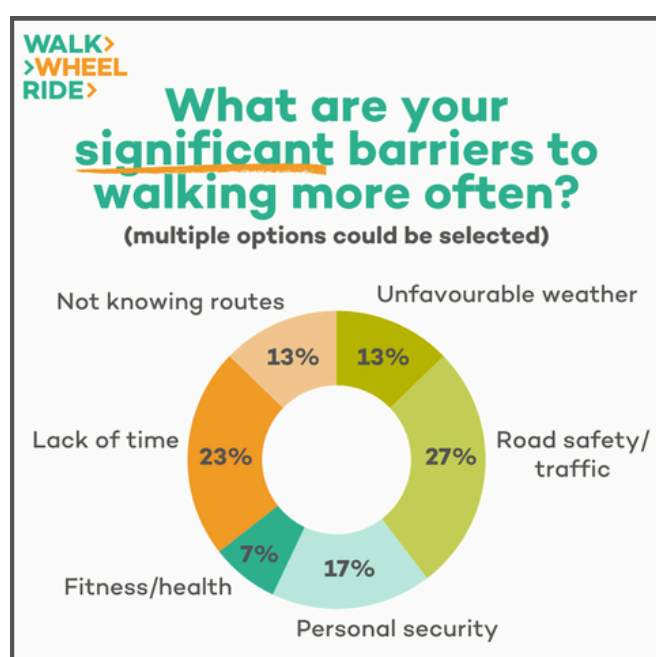
The most significant factors that would encourage increased cycling relate to safety and infrastructure. Three quarters of respondents identified better cycle facilities, such as off-road paths, as the key improvement needed, while nearly half highlighted the importance of secure cycle parking, reflecting concerns about theft and convenience. Qualitative comments reinforced these findings, with fear of traffic, poor road conditions, and fragmented or low-quality infrastructure frequently cited as deterrents. Respondents expressed frustration with routes that feel unsafe, particularly on busy roads or at junctions, and noted that current provision often favours confident cyclists rather than everyday users. Overall, the findings point to a substantial group of potential cyclists who are willing and interested, but cautious. Addressing safety, road quality and coherent infrastructure would be critical to unlocking higher levels of cycling participation.



Key findings from walking survey

The survey findings show that walking is already a well-established part of everyday travel for many respondents. Over a third reported walking every day, and more than half walk on five to seven days per week, indicating that walking is a routine activity rather than an occasional choice. Despite these relatively high levels of participation, there remains a strong appetite for increased walking, with 69% of respondents stating that they would like to walk more. This suggests that even frequent walkers perceive opportunities to increase their walking, and that current levels are shaped more by external constraints than by personal motivation.

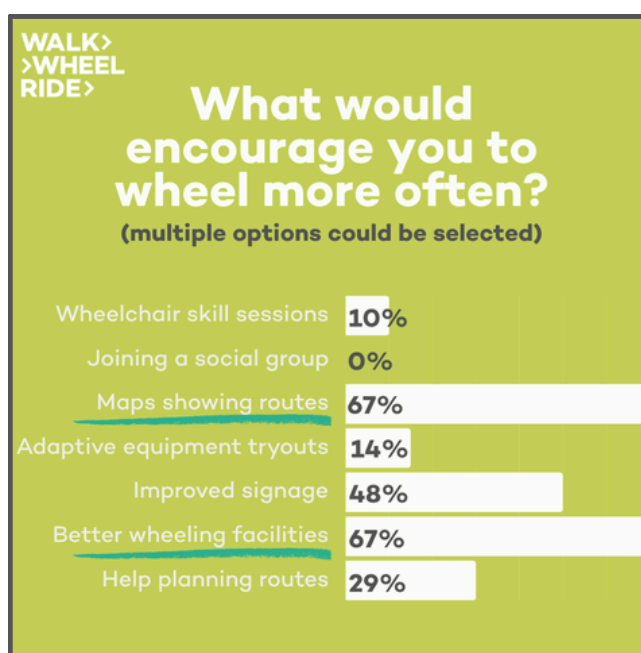
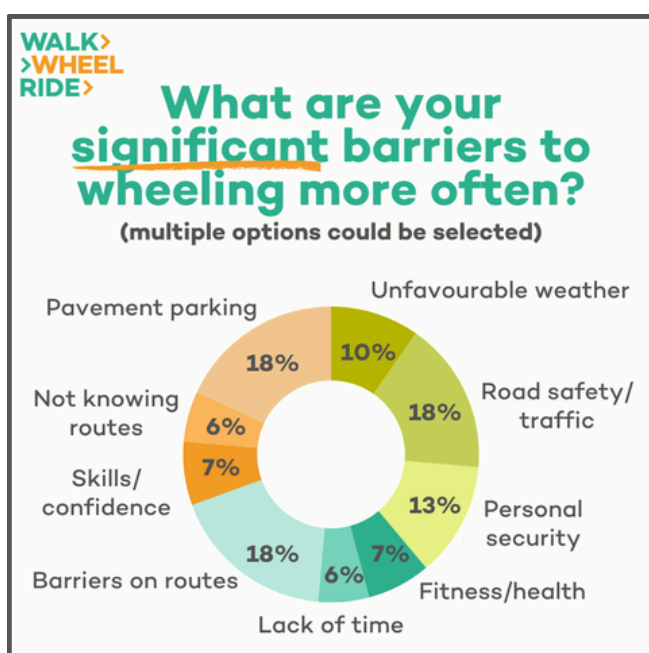
The main barriers to walking relate to safety, comfort and the quality of the walking environment. Road safety and traffic, along with personal security, emerged as the most significant deterrents, with a substantial proportion of respondents rating these as major barriers. While unfavourable weather was commonly mentioned, it was largely viewed as a minor and unavoidable issue. Respondents highlighted a need for practical improvements to support walking, particularly better information and maps, improved pavement quality and accessibility, clearer signage, and places to stop and rest. Open comments reinforced these themes, with concerns about fast traffic, unsafe crossings, poor lighting, uneven surfaces and pavement obstructions recurring frequently. Overall, the findings indicate that while walking levels are already relatively high, further increases are likely to depend on creating safer, more accessible and better-maintained walking environments that improve confidence and comfort for a wide range of users.



Key findings from wheeling survey

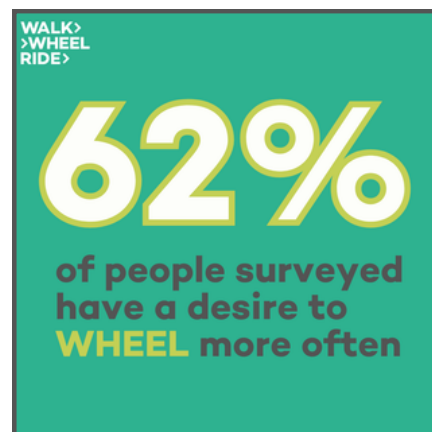
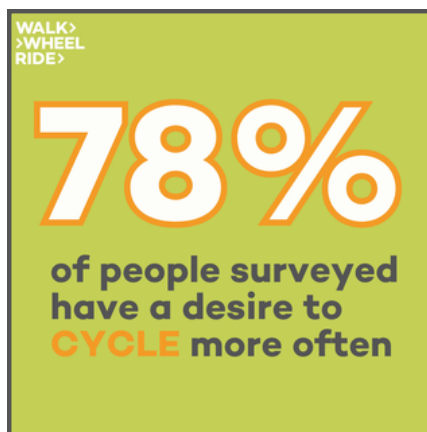
The wheeling survey, based on 21 responses, shows a mixed pattern of participation that reflects differing levels of reliance on wheeling aids. Around one third of respondents reported wheeling every day, indicating people for whom wheeling is an essential part of daily life. At the same time, a notable proportion wheel infrequently or not at all, which may reflect those who only use aids occasionally or who are discouraged by environmental barriers. Despite the small sample size, there is a clear desire to wheel more, with 62% of respondents stating that they would like to increase how often they wheel. This suggests that, as with cycling and walking, current levels of wheeling are shaped more by external constraints than by lack of interest.

Barriers to wheeling are dominated by fundamental accessibility and safety issues. Pavement parking, unfavourable weather and road safety were each identified by over 80% of respondents as barriers, closely followed by physical obstructions and poor route conditions. Written comments strongly reinforce these findings, with repeated references to uneven, sloping or broken pavements causing discomfort, pain and risk of tipping, and frequent obstructions such as parked cars and street furniture forcing people into the road. Respondents also highlighted inconsistent accessibility, including poorly aligned or blocked dropped kerbs and crossings that do not function well in practice. In terms of encouragements, better wheeling facilities and clearer information and maps were most commonly requested, alongside improved signage and support with route planning. Overall, the findings point to a strong need for consistent, well-maintained and obstruction-free infrastructure, without which many people are prevented from wheeling safely and confidently in their everyday journeys.



Strong Appetite for More Active Travel

One of the main findings from the survey was that there is a strong appetite for a greater uptake of active travel journeys within Huddersfield. The data shows that motivation is not the main barrier as more people indicated they would like to walk, wheel and cycle more:

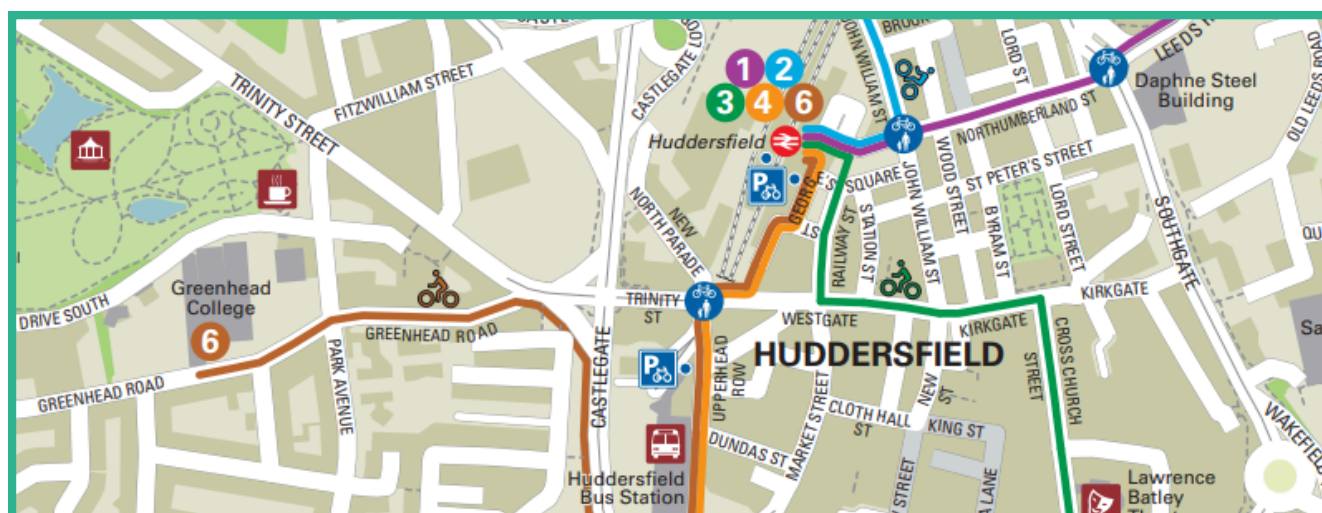


Information and Confidence Matter

Respondents consistently highlighted the importance of:

- Clear route information and maps
- Signage
- Knowing where safer or more accessible routes exist

This aligns closely with the project's emphasis on led walks, route mapping and filmed routes to build confidence and provide information which supports behaviour change. The data highlights the importance of safe, legible, well-maintained routes feeding into Huddersfield Station, with joined-up thinking between rail infrastructure and surrounding streets.



Learning

The combination of practical engagement activities, targeted support for different user groups, public consultation and digital mapping created a rich evidence base that reflects real lived experience, not just theoretical routes.

This approach helped to surface detailed, location-specific insights as well as identify a large group of “interested but cautious” active travel users who may make up the modal shift if the conditions were right. During the project we developed a number of learning points which were useful to inform project activities and for future projects.

Balancing Digital Engagement with Accessibility and Value

The project provided valuable learning about the use of digital engagement platforms alongside on-the-ground community activity.

While Commonplace offered a structured way to collect and map feedback, in practice it proved challenging to achieve high levels of participation without significant additional support. Many participants required one-to-one assistance or encouragement to engage with the platform, particularly people who were:

- Less digitally confident
- Using assistive technology
- Engaging casually at events rather than seeking out an online survey

As a result, much of the most meaningful insight was generated through in-person conversations, led activities and supported engagement, with the platform acting primarily as a recording tool rather than a driver of participation.

Cost and Proportionality

The project also highlighted the importance of matching engagement tools to the scale and nature of the work. While Commonplace produced useful visual outputs, the cost of the platform was high relative to the volume of responses collected and the level of staff time required to support its use.

In future projects of a similar scale, EPIKS would look to:

- Use lower-cost, more flexible tools for capturing survey data
- Prioritise methods that integrate more seamlessly with face-to-face engagement
- Allocate a greater proportion of resources directly to activities that build confidence and support behaviour change

Value of Face-to-Face and Supported Engagement

A key learning from the project is that people are willing to share detailed and thoughtful feedback when engagement is personal and practical and based on real experiences. Activities such as led walks, test rides, route mapping and targeted support for people using mobility equipment consistently generated richer discussion and more nuanced insight than standalone digital surveys.

This learning will inform future delivery by reinforcing the value of:

- Meeting people where they are
- Embedding engagement within practical activities
- Using digital tools as a complementary approach, rather than the primary method, of engagement



Informing Future Practice

Overall, the project has strengthened EPIKS' understanding of how to design engagement that is inclusive, focused on lived experience as well as cost-effective. These lessons will shape future projects to ensure that resources are used in ways that maximise participation, insight and impact. For example, for future public engagement, EPIKS would use a low-cost data collection platform such as Google Forms alongside face-to-face consultation to maximise value for money and resources. Activities would be designed based on feedback from this project and further local community consultation focusing on location specifics. For example, we would look to extend our route filming to walking and accessible routes as well as cycling routes and develop maps which supported people to discover their local walking routes which linked up to train stations.



Conclusion

The EPIKS First Mile Last Mile Project has demonstrated the clear value of combining practical engagement activities with structured public consultation to build a detailed picture of walking, wheeling and cycling experiences around Huddersfield Train Station. The project has generated robust quantitative and qualitative data that highlights both current travel behaviours and, critically, the strong latent demand for increased active travel across all modes. By capturing lived experience through surveys, mapping, filmed routes and in-person engagement, the project has moved beyond abstract discussions of infrastructure to provide tangible, location-specific evidence of what helps and hinders people in making active and multimodal journeys. This evidence base is a valuable resource for informing future investment and design decisions, particularly in relation to safety, accessibility, route quality and the integration of active travel with rail.

Running engagement activities alongside data collection has been central to the project's success. Led walks, test rides, maintenance sessions and wheelchair skills training not only supported individuals to build confidence and skills but also created meaningful opportunities for participants to reflect on their journeys and articulate barriers in real time. This approach helped to identify a significant group of “interested but cautious” users who are motivated to walk, wheel or cycle more, but are currently constrained by environmental and infrastructural factors rather than personal preference. The project therefore demonstrates that engagement, which is practical, inclusive and grounded in real-world experience can both support behaviour changes and produce richer, more actionable insight than consultation alone.

Importantly, the findings and delivery model from this project are transferable and could be successfully applied in other locations. The issues identified in Huddersfield—such as concerns around safety, route continuity, accessibility, signage and confidence—are common across many towns and transport hubs. The project offers a replicable framework that combines targeted activities, accessible engagement methods and proportionate data collection tools to inform local decision-making. With appropriate adaptation to local context, this approach could be taken forward elsewhere to support active travel uptake, strengthen first- and last-mile connections to public transport, and ensure that future schemes are shaped by the voices and experiences of the people who use them.