

Sustrans urges Government to beat obesity epidemic by implementing NICE guidance

Obesity levels will continue to soar unless transport planners follow today's groundbreaking guidance encouraging walking and cycling as physical activity, the UK's leading sustainable transport charity said today.

Sustrans applauded the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) for its vision in recommending that pedestrians and cyclists should be given priority in planning and building towns and cities.

The NICE recommendations include restricting motor vehicle access, the reallocation of road space, road-user charging and creation of comprehensive walking and cycling networks, to help people lead a healthy, active life. This will help prevent and manage over 20 conditions including coronary heart disease, diabetes, cancer, obesity and mental health problems.

This is the first time NICE has drawn up recommendations aimed at land use and transport planners; the guidance was developed by a panel of independent experts including Sustrans.

Sustrans has called on the Department for Transport and local authorities to act on the guidance.

Malcolm Shepherd, Sustrans' Operations Director, said: "These are excellent recommendations from NICE, addressing the conflict between the Government's wish to promote healthy living and a transport and planning system which deters people from walking and cycling.

“Everything NICE recommends as health promoting will also help address climate change and make urban areas more people friendly and liveable. This guidance should be the final argument convincing the transport sector of the role they play in enabling people to lead healthy lifestyles, and to make walking and cycling the first priority for all local trips.”

Today’s guidance follows the Foresight Report in October, which put the potential cost of the obesity epidemic to the UK by 2050 at over £45billion a year - almost half the NHS budget.

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For further information please contact the Press Office

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ISDN line available for radio interviews.

Notes to Editors:

- NICE’s guidance is entitled *Public Health Guidance: Promoting and creating built or natural environments that encourage and support physical activity*.
- Sustrans is the UK’s leading sustainable transport charity. Its vision is a world in which people choose to travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment. It is achieving this through innovative but practical solutions to the UK’s transport challenges.
- Sustrans’ flagship project, the National Cycle Network, is now around 12,000 miles and runs within one mile of over half the UK population. During 2006 over 338 million trips were made on the Network. It is maintained by a team of 2,400 volunteer Rangers.
- Sustrans’ groundbreaking UK-wide Connect2 programme was awarded £50million last month in the Big Lottery Fund’s Living Landmarks: The People’s Millions competition after winning a public vote. Connect2 aims to transform local travel by creating walking and cycling routes in 79 communities across the UK, bringing significant health and environmental benefits.
- The complete guidance can be viewed at <http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/index.jsp> from January 23.