

Active Journey's in East Sussex

Schools and Communities, Sep 2024 – 2025

Background: The Sustrans Schools and Community Active Travel Project is funded by East Sussex County Council (ESCC) through Active Travel England's Capability and Ambition Fund. Sustrans has been delivering active travel behaviour change and engagement projects with ESCC since 2013, working to make it easier for people to walk, wheel, and cycle in East Sussex.

Introduction: This report covers the 2024/25 academic year, from September 2024 to the end of August 2025, during which one Project Officer was contracted at 0.8 FTE (4 days per week).

Aim: The overall aim of the project is to increase modal shift towards active modes of travel within school and community settings. The Sustrans Project Officer works in a targeted way, focusing on specific geographic areas and thematic priorities identified by ESCC.

For everyone: At the heart of this project is Sustrans' 'For Everyone' value- ensuring that active travel initiatives are inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the diverse needs of communities. This means recognising that not everyone experiences the same opportunities or barriers when it comes to walking, wheeling and cycling. Sustrans actively engages with underrepresented and marginalised groups, listens to lived experiences, and co-designs interventions that are culturally relevant, accessible, and empowering.

Methodology: The programme of activities is underpinned by the [COM-B](#) behaviour change model, which highlights that Capability, Opportunity, and Motivation must all be addressed to achieve lasting changes in travel behaviour.



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Project deliverables

- 1** Intensive and regular engagement with the three **School Street** schools & the communities nearby, to enable behaviour change to support the infrastructure changes
- 2** Community engagement around the Peacehaven & Telscombe feasibility study and supporting the ongoing piece of work to make the area more walkable and cycleable
- 3** Continuing some light touch engagement with refugees via Sanctuary Eastbourne to support active travel

Attendee numbers

Across the three schools, our Project Officer engaged with **1,565 pupils**, plus **276 parents and carers** during School Street events.

Across Peacehaven and Telscombe, the Sustrans Officer engaged with an estimated **1,542 people** through school assemblies, community events, cycling sessions, and walks

Through the Sanctuary, we had 12 cycles donated and checked/ fixed 14.

Sustrans support of East Sussex School Streets

2024-25



Following on from a successful trial (supported by Sustrans) in 2021, East Sussex County Council (ESCC) launched their first School Street schemes in Sept 2024 with three schools:

- Langney Primary Academy (Eastbourne)
- Southover C of E (Lewes)
- All Saints C of E Primary (Bexhill)

The scheme aims to make school journeys safer, calmer and more enjoyable by restricting motor vehicle access at peak times through a legal traffic order with signage.

This helps to encourage more walking and cycling, supporting a gradual shift toward safer, healthier travel habits within the community.

A six-month Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) was put in place to enable the parents, pupils, teachers and residents to feedback their experiences.

The Sustrans Project Officer played a key role in educating and raising awareness of the changes to the street and **empowering families to walk, wheel or cycle to school.**

This case study is written in June 2025, reflecting on Sustrans project delivery during the academic year 2024-25.

Launch of active travel activities

Together with ESCC, Sustrans delivered **celebration days** at all three Schools to launch, including:

- Assemblies and classroom workshops to introduce the School Street scheme and highlight the benefits for the school community
- Smoothie bikes were set up before and after school to create an exciting, health-focused atmosphere
- 800 children received badges for walking or wheeling to school.

The purpose of the celebration events was to ensure that children, parents and staff understood the purpose of the School Street and how it connected to broader issues such as road safety, health, and air quality.



Photo: Langney School Facebook page

Headline figures



10 percentage point change in pupils “usually” travelling to school by active modes



Over **1000** children and family members involved in active travel initiatives



-12.7 percentage point reduction in pupils usually being driven to school

“To celebrate the start of School Streets at Langney, we tried to get as many children and staff to ditch their cars and scoot, cycle or walk to school.”

From Langney School Facebook page

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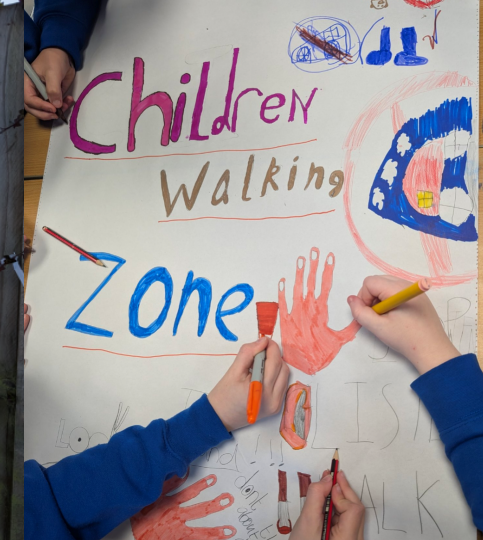
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A broad programme of active travel initiatives

To maintain momentum of active travel within the three school communities, the Sustrans Project Officer shared a menu of active travel initiatives with each school in the Autumn term of 2024. Schools could choose and tailor these activities based on their specific needs and resources.

Some examples included:

- Air quality workshops
- Road safety events
- Balance bike and Learn to Ride sessions
- Active travel celebration days
- Bike maintenance workshops
- Dr Bike events

“Sustrans have supported us in our quest for safer roads around our school and helped us all to live more sustainably. A number of workshops were held in school with very keen pupils. Well done everyone!”

From Langney School Facebook page



Example: All Saint CE Primary School & Nursery

Following regular school visits and observations, we identified All Saints CE Primary School as requiring additional support due to limited parental engagement and continued vehicle use in the restricted zone.

The Sustrans Project Officer organised a successful **Road Safety Week**, which included:

- A Park & Stride event
- Active travel incentive scheme
- Poster workshop promoting the School Street

The student's posters were displayed on the school fence to remind parents not to drive into the restricted zone.

The Sustrans Project Officer delivered a **Walk and Wheel to Nursery** week, where children earned stickers each day they used active travel. They also ran a weekly **balance bike session**, supported by nursery staff. There was visible progress in children's cycling confidence.

The Sustrans Project Officer also maintained a regular presence outside All Saints during School Street hours.

This created opportunities to reinforce the scheme's purpose, greet and reward children for using active travel and to have constructive conversations with parents who continued to drive on the restricted road.

The Sustrans Project Officer supported children to take part in a **traffic survey**, where pupils helped to count the number of cars driving through the area during restricted hours. By increasing the visibility of the pupils, this activity aimed to prompt drivers to reflect on their own actions and reconsider driving through the restrictions.

“A big thank you to everyone who participated and supported this important cause. It's through collective efforts like these that we can safeguard the wellbeing of our children and make a positive impact on road safety for all. Let's continue to work together to create safer roads and promote awareness in our community!”

Cllr Abul Azad, Sidley



Photo: Cllr Abul Azad

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Partnership with Bikeability team

Each School Street school received dedicated Bikeability funding. The Sustrans Project Officer worked closely with the ESCC Bikeability team, promoting courses and helping schools to organise sessions.

Key actions by Sustrans officer included regular communication with headteachers and reminders about funding availability. At Langney school, the Sustrans Project Officer arranged Bikeability vouchers for pupils to access free training at Eastbourne Sports Park (ESP).

Whilst the school did not take up the offer of free Bikeability courses, pupils from Langney school used their 'Bikeability vouchers' to access training outside of school time.

Following this additional support and funding, the Bikeability team have also seen a significant increase in bookings from Southover school (from 21 bookings in 2024 to 36 in 2025) and All Saints school (from 9 bookings in 2024 to 26 in 2025).



Big Walk and Wheel (BWA) Engagement

The Sustrans Officer also promoted participation in **Sustrans Big Walk and Wheel**, encouraging schools to use the national campaign to celebrate their School Street.

At Langney school, the senior leadership team showed support and enthusiasm. This included:

- Smoothie bike and healthy snacks for children arriving actively
- Good promotion through school social media
- A visibly engaged and supportive school community

"I went back to the school gates for this new term to see Eastbourne's first School Street...It was a pleasant change to see children and adults walking and chatting in the road. The restriction of motor traffic makes walking, cycling, and scooting much easier and has huge benefits for physical activity, injury reduction, and community cohesion."

Professor Scarlett McNally. The British Medical Journal.
[Scarlett McNally: Building healthy habits for the new academic year | The BMJ](#)

Conclusion and Reflections

Sustrans' involvement helped to amplify and embed the School Street schemes. We saw measurable shift towards families travelling activity to school, and we achieved this by:

- The Sustrans Project Officer engaging directly with school communities as a visible and approachable member of staff.
- Offering flexible and tailored activities, based on needs of the school and behaviour change theory
- Working in close collaboration with schools, Bikeability, and ESCC

Lessons learned:

- Clear and regular communication from the school to their community is crucial to cascading information and embedding the School Street
- Parent engagement is key to lasting behaviour change
- Regular visibility and follow-up activities help maintain momentum

This first year of the scheme will inform how the School Streets can be supported and expanded across East Sussex in the future.

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Promoting Active Travel in Peacehaven & Telscombe



2022 - 23

In April 2022, the Sustrans Project Officer started working in Peacehaven, focussed on encouraging walking, wheeling and cycling to school. One of the initial challenges was establishing contact with schools, as it was often difficult to identify the appropriate staff member to engage with and build ongoing communication.

To address this challenge, the Sustrans Project Officer utilised the Peacehaven Active Travel Hub, based at the Big Park, as a central location for delivering and promoting active travel initiatives. This hub became a focal point for community engagement and activity delivery.

From this location, the Project Officer organised regular holiday cycling courses for local children, including:

- Learn to Ride sessions for beginners
- Bike Skills sessions for developing confidence and control

These sessions were inclusive and open to children of all abilities.

Over the course of the year, 57 sessions were delivered, with 298 children taking part.

2024 - 25

In September 2024, East Sussex County Council funded a new Sustrans project in Peacehaven and Telscombe to explore how active travel could be made easier, safer, and more appealing locally. This work supports ESCC's planned infrastructure improvements in the area, such as safer crossings and cycle routes.

The Sustrans Project Officer played a vital role in delivering this project-building trust, connecting with schools and community groups, organising events and working with individuals and groups to help remove barriers to active travel.

Using the **COM-B model**, the Officer focused on:

- **Capability** – helping people develop skills and confidence through training and support.
- **Opportunity** – creating safe, accessible spaces and events where people can walk, wheel, or cycle.
- **Motivation** – inspiring and encouraging behavior change through fun, inclusive activities and visible community engagement.

Quotes from parents/ carers of participants

“Matilda could not ride when she came to the sessions and now can confidently ride on her own, its been a transformation and she has a new love of cycling. Thank you so much”

Parent/ Carer

“My son has grown in confidence on a bike. Ania has been amazing with him and all the other kids. Awesome session , we will be back!”

Parent/ Carer

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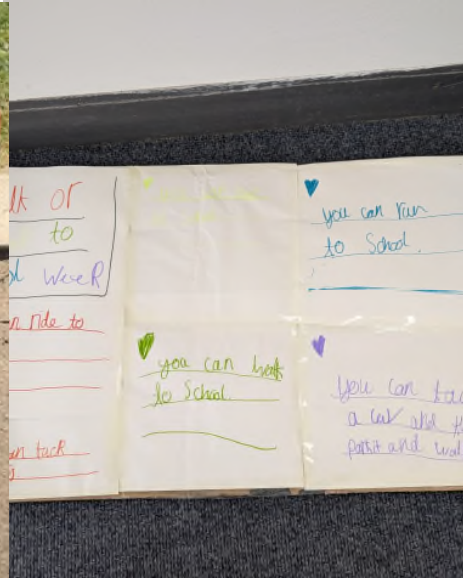
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The Sustrans Project Officer organized a wide range of activities in schools and communities in the area, establishing new connections and relationships that supported the East Sussex County Council initiative in Peacehaven and Telscombe.

Below, you can find the details of the events along with the numbers involved.

Schools Engagement

At the start, school engagement was challenging. Many school staff were unsure what was on offer, and email contact often went unanswered. The Sustrans Project Officer addressed this by making personal visits, meeting staff face-to-face, and using local events as entry points for conversation.

Existing connections with Peacehaven Community School provided a strong foundation.

In previous years, the Sustrans Officer Project had supported the school with girls' cycling sessions, helped them use bikes for Enrichment Day activities, and worked closely with the Bikeability team — including visiting the school together to promote Bikeability courses.

In 2025, the Sustrans Project Officer delivered a Dr Bike session, checking and repairing 17 bikes, and supported school staff to promote the Big Walk and Wheel through an engaging student presentation. The school also benefited from smoothie bike activities on two occasions, helping to raise awareness of active travel and health in a fun and memorable way. These collaborations helped to strengthen trust and maintain a positive relationship with the school, paving the way for further engagement.

“We also wanted to thank you for helping us with our Walk and Wheel to School Week! It was great to see the children so engaged and enthusiastic — your input helped to create a memorable and impactful week.”

Deputy Head, Jayne Campling

The Project Officer also built good relationships with Telscombe Cliffs Academy. They led a whole-school assembly introducing Sustrans and the benefits of active travel. This was followed by a Dr Bike event, where 5 pupils' bikes were checked and repaired, and two days of Air Quality workshops using microscopes to show the link between active travel and cleaner air. Two after-school Bike Skills sessions gave 18 children the chance to develop their riding skills with their parents present, generating immediate positive feedback.

The Sustrans Project Officer also coordinated Walk and Wheel to School Week, greeting families, handing out stickers, and rewarding pupils with healthy snacks. Parents commented that their children's enthusiasm had encouraged them to walk or wheel more often.

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Cycling skills sessions for home educated children

This activity was a joint initiative between two Sustrans projects- working in partnership with the Sustrans and Sussex Community Development Association's (SCDA) "Moveability" project.

The 12 sessions were held weekly at the Peacehaven Cycle Hub, located in the Big Park, and 30 children took part in activities. The sessions were designed to support children of all abilities- from complete beginners learning to ride, to more confident riders wanting to build their skills.

The idea for the sessions emerged after both organizations recognised a gap in cycling opportunities for children who are educated at home, particularly those with additional needs such as neurodiversity, hidden disabilities, or low confidence.

With access to a safe space (the MUGA and nearby park), a container of cycles and experienced instructors, the sessions were popular.

With the support of three dedicated volunteers- two from Sustrans and one from SCDA- the sessions offered a vibrant and enjoyable environment.

Children gained valuable experience riding in the park, learning to manage common challenges such as navigating grassy areas, hill climbing, and maintaining control around dogs and other park users.

Many children overcame initial anxiety about cycling in public spaces and developed the confidence to ride in a standing position and tackle off-road sections.

"I am very happy with the amazing charity fun cycling lessons that you run. Caleb started and could not even pedal and in only 5 weeks Caleb has now learnt how to not only pedal but start off on his own.

Caleb said : he liked learning how to ride a bike, and the adults are fun too."

Caleb and his mother

Parents appreciated the supportive and inclusive environment.

The flexibility of the sessions meant they could be adapted to meet each child's needs, and the consistent structure allowed families to feel part of a wider cycling community.

Children developed not only their cycling abilities but also their confidence and independence.



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Recovery Walks

Another part of the project has been the introduction of weekly Recovery Walks in successful partnership with The Conservation Volunteers.

These walks were designed to support people recovering from illness, injury, or poor mental health. The group met each week at the Big Park and enjoyed short, gentle walks in a welcoming and friendly environment. The aim was to rebuild confidence, improve physical fitness, and reduce isolation, with the hope that the walks will continue independently in the future.

One local resident who lives near the park shared that she discovered the Recovery Walk through a notice at the local library. She now regularly joins the walks. As she is unable to go on longer walks, the gentle pace and supportive atmosphere suit her perfectly. She also mentioned the mental health benefits of being outdoors and connecting with others in the community.

As a regular participant in our recovery walks in the Big Park, Chris – supported by his wife Jacqui – has now progressed to joining longer walks in the Peacehaven area.

This has been a meaningful step for them, as walking was something they both enjoyed doing before Chris's operation.

To mark this positive milestone, The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) shared a lovely farewell note on social media (right).

“Lovely friendly group, walk pace set for all abilities.

Time to stop and rest”
Helen- Participant



“A fond farewell to Chris, Jacqui and Amber



Chris has been walking with our Peacehaven Recovery group for the past 8 weeks. Our gentle weekly walks have played a part in helping him regain strength and confidence—and now he's ready to re-join other walking groups and take on longer walks!

It's been lovely having Chris, Jacqui and Amber with us. We'll miss them, but we're so pleased to see how far Chris has come.”

TCV Social Media post

“Thoroughly enjoy this walking group. I am walking with my husband who has recently had a total hip replacement. His walk has helped his recovery”

Jacqui- Participant

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Peacehaven Family Hub

Building Strong Local Partnerships

A new partnership was formed between Sustrans and the Peacehaven Family Hub - a local community space that provides support and services for families with children aged 0–19 (or up to 25 for those with special educational needs and disabilities).

It brings together a range of services in one place—such as parenting support, early years activities, health advice, and education support—to ensure families can access the help they need in a welcoming and accessible environment.

We agreed to run a series of balance bike sessions at the Family Hub for children aged two to five. The final session also invited siblings to join.

The events are supported by staff from the Hub, helping to create a fun, inclusive, and supportive environment for all attending.

The close partnership fostered by the Project Officer with the Peacehaven Family Hub has helped promote the events and ensured they are accessible and welcoming to local families.

The Peacehaven and Telscombe Active Travel project has shown how strong community links, consistent presence of Sustrans Officer, and inclusive activities can lay the groundwork for lasting behavior change.

As East Sussex County Council continues to invest in improved walking and cycling infrastructure, these established relationships provide an ideal platform for embedding changes.

The relationships developed with local schools, the Peacehaven Cycle Hub, park authorities, community groups, and the Family Hub have created a network of partners who are well placed to support future initiatives.

Organisations such as the Family Hub, local schools, and community networks have the potential to act as gateways to residents of all ages and can bring valuable skills, resources, and local knowledge.

The foundations laid through this work mean that new routes, safer junctions, and better cycling facilities can be introduced into a community that is already engaged, motivated, and aware of the benefits.

Looking ahead, the challenge (but also opportunity) will be to ensure that the social connections, skills, and confidence built through this project are fully integrated with new infrastructure, making active travel the natural choice for everyday journeys in Peacehaven and Telscombe.

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Sanctuary 2024-25

Bikes for those seeking refuge



Background

Since February 2023, the Sustrans Active Travel Officer in East Sussex has supported Sanctuary Café in Eastbourne by providing bikes and cycling sessions for refugees and asylum seekers. In partnership with East Sussex County Council and supported by Sport England Together Fund & Active Sussex. This work promotes connection, mobility, and wellbeing.

Following the closure of the hotels that previously housed asylum seekers and refugees, the activity at the Sanctuary Café changed significantly. While the number of bikes needing repair initially declined, the demand for bikes from families and new clients steadily increased.



The Sustrans Project Officer remained actively engaged, constantly searching for bicycles to donate. This included reaching out to Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) and the Community Rail Partnership. These requests were strongly supported by East Sussex County Council.

Occasionally, generous members of the public also donated bikes. Each donated bike was safety-checked and refurbished by the Sustrans Project Officer before being passed on to a client.

Partnerships and Engagement

The Sustrans Project Officer also supported the Walk to Nature programme, organised by the South Downs National Park (SDNP).

The walks helped build trust with clients and strengthened collaboration with SDNP. These informal outdoor activities offered clients a gentle, welcoming way to connect with local nature and community life.

Project Successes



14 cycles
fixed for
residents



12 bikes
donated by
members of
the public

Many of our clients do not have recourse to public funds or are surviving off a small stipend. Therefore thanks to Sustrans they are able to mobilise. Riding a Bike offers choice and freedom to our clients as well as positive mental health and well-being. We are truly grateful for the partnership."

**Nora Ferguson, Volunteer
Coordinator, Sanctuary Café**

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Personal Impact Stories: Peer Support and Growing Engagement

One client, who volunteers twice a week at Rooted in Eastbourne (a community allotment project), received a donated bike.

He had been struggling with insomnia and mental health issues. Since receiving the bike, he shared that cycling for leisure and being able to easily reach the allotment has helped him sleep better and improved his overall wellbeing. The bike came from a local resident who reached out to Sanctuary to offer two bikes for donation.

Another positive outcome of the cycling support at Sanctuary Café involved a woman who volunteers regularly, offering translation and support for other women.

She participated in a Sustrans Learn to Ride session at Fishermen's Green, where she successfully learned to cycle. To support her continued independence and mobility, she was later gifted a refurbished bike.

As the Sustrans Project Officer continued offering bike repairs at Sanctuary Café, a positive and unexpected development emerged—clients began showing interest in getting involved.

From September 2024, several clients expressed a desire to help with basic bike maintenance during the Friday sessions. This hands-on involvement not only supported the officer's work but also empowered participants by building their confidence, skills, and sense of ownership.

The Sustrans Project Officer adapts support according to need. With fewer drop-in repair sessions required, as we moved to 2025 the officer was able to offer more tailored, one-to-one support. Clients get directly in touch about issues with their cycles. The Sustrans Project Officer can bring the appropriate parts to the next session, and advise clients based on their specific issues.

One client contacted Sanctuary in distress when his bike broke just before a college exam.

The Sustrans Project Officer quickly stepped in, replaced the wheel and inner tube, and got the bike roadworthy again—ensuring the student made it to the exam on time.

Conclusion:

This case study highlights how adaptable, compassionate support—like that offered by the Sustrans officer at Sanctuary Café—can make a significant difference in people's lives.

Whether it's through providing bikes, repairing them, or simply being a friendly and reliable presence, the project continues to empower clients with independence, confidence, and access to essential services.

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