

Welcome to the Spring edition of the Schools Go Smarter newsletter, the place to find out about sustainable travel initiatives in Northumberland. For more information about anything you see here please email tracy.aitken@northumberland.gov.uk

Active Travel Ambassadors Campaign Junction

Secondary school pupils from across Northumberland came together to pitch their active and sustainable travel ideas to a panel of special guests in a Dragon's Den style event, as part of the National Active Travel Ambassador (ATA) programme.

Pupils from **Barndale House, Barndale By-the-Sea, Collingwood School and Media Arts College, Cramlington Learning Village, King Edward V1 School, Seaton Sluice Middle School (in photo) and Whytrig Middle School**, attended the event in the Council Chambers at County Hall in Morpeth, for the chance of securing £200 to bring their plans to life.

Their campaigns covered different priorities based on the pupils' research, including supporting independent bus travel, encouraging more pupils to walk, wheel and cycle, and making active travel a normal part of everyday life. All of the ideas and presentations were excellent and it was difficult for the panel to choose a winner but **Barndale by the Sea** came out on top with their project to organise themed walks to school, which will reduce traffic at the school gate, improve pupils' health and confidence while also being lots of fun!

If your school would like to get involved next year get in touch with; tracy.aitken@northumberland.gov.uk or lou@modeshift.org.uk



Walk to School Week 18-22 May

Walk to School Week will soon be here with another five-day walking challenge. **Schools should request resources by 1 May [by completing this form](#)**

Pupils will be encouraged to travel actively to school every day of the week and receive classroom packs to track their progress on wallcharts and earn stickers as they go along with a special reward at the end of the week. This year's challenge will see pupils set off on a special operation - codename **Mission Move**, to complete the five-day walking challenge. On the way, pupils will meet fun and friendly secret agents as they explore the many benefits of walking or wheeling to school, are you up for the challenge?





Modeshift National Travel Awards

Stannington First School travelled to London in March to represent Northumberland at the Modeshift STARS National Travel Awards. The awards showcase what schools have achieved to encourage more families to travel sustainably and Stannington were one of only 7 schools to be shortlisted for Primary School of the Year Award.

It's a fabulous event and an opportunity to celebrate individual achievements as well as being inspired by other schools.

Stannington were **highly commended** for their work, when Joe Morris MP for Hexham, Deputy Council Leader Richard Wearmouth and Nick Butler Chief Operating Officer Modeshift, paid a visit to the school to find out how

they've achieved this.

We must also give a special mention for the two Stannington superstars who had a very early start for their trip to London and gave an amazing presentation to a packed hall, they were a credit to the school! Stannington didn't win this year, but their achievements still deserve to be celebrated, well done to everyone at Stannington!

Whittingham's Walking Bus

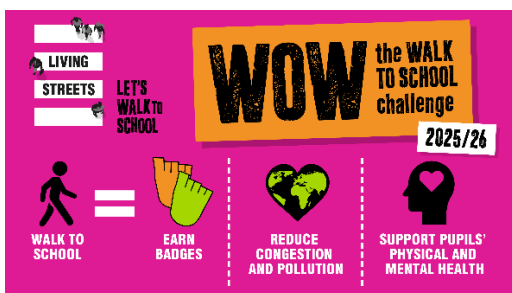
We recently supported Whittingham Primary School to set up a new walking bus with help from NCC's Health and Safety Team.

The school wanted to set up a walking bus to reduce traffic at their entrance and improve safety.

A Walking Bus is a regular organised walk to school from a designated meeting point. Whittingham Walking Bus runs one morning a week, with hopes to extend this and is operated by school staff, supported by parent volunteers.

Although Whittingham is a small village, the volume of through traffic at the start and end of the day was a problem; now pupils and staff can walk to school together in around 5/10 minutes on a car free route from the village green without anyone driving to school!

If you are interested in finding out if a walking bus could work at your school, why not get in touch.



Get pupils walking with Living Streets

Do you want a fun and engaging way to encourage more pupils to walk to school all year?

Find out how you could get involved in [Living Streets WOW Challenge](#) by contacting our regional coordinator

donald.kent@livingstreets.org.uk to register your interest.

Get Cycling in Schools from Bikeability

A further 12 primary schools took part in Bikeability's Get Cycling programme with 2 members of staff at each school completing a half day training workshop and learning how to deliver balance bike sessions to their younger pupils. Schools then received a fleet of 6 balance bikes and helmets so that they can deliver sessions.

The Get Cycling programme is a fantastic opportunity for schools to incorporate cycling into their curriculum, encourage a love of cycling and prepare pupils to take part in formal Bikeability training.

Well done to **Barndale House School, Blyth New Delaval Primary, Bedlington Station Primary, Berwick St Marys C of E Primary, Darras Hall Primary, Holy Trinity C of E Primary, Morpeth First School, Mickley First School, Shaftoe Trust Academy, Tweedmouth West Primary, Seaton Sluice First and Whittingham First** for completing the training.

Don't forget if your school wants to try out some balance bikes you can also 'borrow' some from one of our libraries, see below. ↓

Balance Bike Libraries

Our partnership with the Library Service goes from strength to strength, schools can book out balance bikes, just like borrowing a book, by contacting their nearest library via the details below.

Berwick.library@northumberland.gov.uk

Hexham.library@northumberland.gov.uk

Ashington.library@northumberland.gov.uk

Bedlington.library@northumberland.gov.uk

Schools can borrow a fleet of 10 bikes and helmets with a booklet of fun activities to deliver with their Early Years and Reception classes **for FREE!**

Please note schools must be able to arrange pick up and drop off the balance bikes from the libraries.



Active Travel Inspectors

Active Travel Inspectors is a new resource for schools to carry out inspections of their local areas to discover how easy it really is to walk or cycle near their school. Pupils will become 'Active Travel Inspectors' and look at key areas around their school rating them 'Good' 'OK' or 'Bad'

This will help pupils understand the different infrastructure they might encounter and why it is important, pupils can also look out for things that make it difficult to walk such as overgrown trees, pavement parking or litter.

All resources to run the activity can be downloaded from Modeshift STARs. with the idea that pupils and teachers will go out in their local environment as a group to complete the inspections.

For more information about the Active Travel Inspectors resource get in touch, we can come and help you deliver this activity.



Reminder to check out the School Parking Toolkit

We are seeing an increase in complaints about irresponsible and dangerous parking around our schools. This is a reminder that we need to keep reinforcing the message to parents and carers about what is acceptable behaviour when driving to school.

The start of a new term is an ideal opportunity to make sure everyone knows what expected of them.

Our toolkit, created in partnership with our Road Safety team, has resources you can download to use on social media platforms, parent mail or newsletters.

[Check out the Padlet here](#)

Or scan the QR code 



Please remind families to:

- To walk or wheel to school whenever possible
- Park and Stride if this is an option
- No alternative but to drive? Then park at least 5 minutes from the school gate and always in a careful and responsible manner

Modeshift Accreditations Autumn 2025



There is a lot of hard work and determination that goes on behind the scenes to develop a travel plan and we wanted to say a huge congratulations to those schools who achieved Modeshift STARS accreditation at the beginning of this term.

Stannington First School – Outstanding
Holy Trinity C of E Primary School – Approved

Modeshift updates

Here's a reminder about some of the newer additions to Modeshift.

- New [Active Travel Inspectors](#) resources are now live - find them in the **Guidance** section
- An 'Expiring this Term' column now appears on the **Accreditation Progress** tab showing how many initiatives are due to expire
- School must deliver at least 1 new initiative every year as a minimum
- If you have an 'Approved' level travel plan this will now expire after 1 year
- New templates to download for pupils' activities on the Dashboard in the **Guidance Section/Templates** including Site Audit, Pupil Monitoring Traffic and Cycle Count Template (for monitoring how many bikes you have in your bike shed over a week).

Have a lovely Easter, see you next term

Dates for your diary

Annual Mode of Travel Survey	Spring/Summer Term 2026
Walk to School Week Living Streets	18-22 May 2026
Great Big Green Week	6-14 June 2026
Northumberland Bike Month	1-30 June 2026
Clean Air Day	18 June 2026
Modeshift Summer accreditation Deadline	31 July 2026
World Car Free Day	22 September 2026
International Walk to School Month	1-31 October 2026
Bikeability Cycle to School Week	5-9 October 2026
Road Safety Week	15-21 November 2026
Modeshift Autumn Accreditation deadline	31 December 2026
Big Walk and Wheel	tbc March 2027
Brake Beep Beep Day	tbc March 2027

Useful contacts

Bikeability	admin@outspokentraining.co.uk becky@outspokentraining.co.uk
Balance Bike Libraries	ashington.library@northumberland.gov.uk bedlington.library@northumberland.gov.uk berwick.library@northumberland.gov.uk hexham.library@northumberland.gov.uk
Climate Change Team	climate@northumberland.gov.uk
Independent Travel Training	itt@northumberland.gov.uk
Parking queries	parkingservices@northumberland.gov.uk
Road Safety/Highways issues	highwaysprogramme@northumberland.gov.uk