

Welcome to the summer 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

Our Big Gear Change

To celebrate some key milestones for the new active travel routes between Hexham, Corbridge and in Bedlington we've been working with schools who are near the new routes to promote active travel for the journey to school.

We kicked off with 3 Cycle Try Out days at Hexham Priory School and St Benet Biscop Catholic Academy in Bedlington with neighbouring schools attending at each event. We worked with the fantastic [Everybody's Cycling](#) to deliver workshops to 6 schools with 350 pupils attending over multiple sessions.

Pupils were able to try out a wild and wacky range of bikes including penny farthings (not for the faint hearted), go karts, recumbents, side by side and hand powered bikes. As well as a static cycle powered bubble machine and music maker!

The pupils loved the sessions, with the most overheard comment being, ***'this has been the best day ever'***.



We also dropped into a summer fair at Bede Academy Primary in Blyth to talk to parents about the new route along Blyth A193 Seafront and there is an upcoming session with the poet John Challis at Seaton Sluice First School, who will be working with pupils to create a legacy project for the route between Blyth and Seaton Sluice.

Get in touch if your school is near one of our new walking and cycling routes to find out how you could get involved in these transformative infrastructure projects and help bring them to life for your pupils.



Love Northumberland 2026

The best of Northumberland's environmental and community work was celebrated at this year's LOVE Northumberland Awards, now in their 16th year. ♥

The event at The Alnwick Garden was hosted by BBC Radio Newcastle presenter Anna Foster, with awards presented by The Duchess of Northumberland and once again, we were fortunate to have our own category 'The School's Sustainable Travel Award' for a school who has gone the extra mile to promote sustainable travel, this year's nominees were;

Winner - Ellington Primary School - Active Breaktimes

Runner up- Stannington First School - Pupil Pester Power and Mr Prickles

Highly Commended

**Grange View Primary School – Pedal Power for the Planet
and**

Whittingham Primary School - Whittingham's Walking Bus

Well done to everyone that entered, there are some amazing projects, you can find out more about the winners here [Love Northumberland 2026](#).

Why not start thinking about which of your projects you could enter next year to show off your school's environmental credentials!



Get your Early Years cycling, borrow some of our balance bikes!

Schools can borrow some of our balance bikes, just like borrowing a book by contacting their nearest library via the details below.

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.

Ashington.library@northumberland.gov.uk
Berwick.library@northumberland.gov.uk

Bedlington.library@northumberland.gov.uk
Hexham.library@northumberland.gov.uk

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

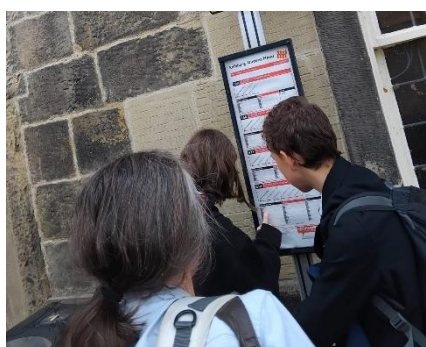
Active Travel Ambassadors

The wonderful ATA pupils have begun launching their travel campaigns utilising the funding received at the Campaign Junction event. Some great successes so far include KEVI's '*Bus Bravery*' project. The students are completing four bus trips this term to build their confidence on public transport.

Barndale-By-The-Sea also planned a brilliant park and stride day and when neighbouring school King Edwin's caught wind of the walk they joined in too, doubling the impact! Pupils dressed up as their favourite heroes and walked from Morrisons car park to school, finishing it all with a celebratory breakfast. School champion, Caitlin, is aiming to make the Park and Stride a termly event to encourage independence and active travel. This is just the start! More campaigns are rolling out this term and in September - so watch this space!

Did your school miss out on ATA this year, don't worry, there's still time to get involved next term, space is limited so email lou@modeshift.org.uk to get on the free programme in September.

Here's a [Short video](#) from Northumberland's Campaign Junction event.



Walk to School Week

We had a fantastic Walk to School Week in May with over 20 schools and 3500 pupils taking part in the annual week celebrating walking to school. This year's theme was Mission Move with secret agents helping pupils to discover the benefits of walking and wheeling to school. There were assemblies, walking buses, skipathons, danceathons, creative walking sessions and much more.

Why not add International Walk to School month in October your school diary, to keep the momentum going or as a great place to start your active travel journey at the start of the new academic year.



October is International Walk to School Month

Every October during [International Walk to School Month](#) we have 4 weeks of active travel themed activities for schools to get involved in, there's no pressure, just take part in as much or as little as you are able. Last year we had over 30 schools taking part and discovering that W2SM is a great way to kick start your active travel year!

Sign up [here](#) to let us know if you are planning to take part in W2SM this October and to request your free resources, we'll be sharing a revised template over the summer but just get in touch in the meantime if you have any questions.



Ride Leader Level 1 Course

We are delivering a private Ride Leader Level 1 course on Wednesday 23rd September at County Hall in Morpeth for school staff, the course gives staff the skills to run led rides at their school.

There are a few places left but attendees would need to be registered before the **1st September**, please get in touch as soon as possible to reserve your place by completing this [form](#). You can find out more about the Ride Leader Level 1 Award [here](#)

Get pupils walking with Living Streets sign up WOW for 2026/27

There are free WOW places for the 2026/27 academic year for schools who are new to WOW, you will receive monthly collectable badges, access to Living Streets Travel Tracker and local coordinator support and it's an easy way to get started on your active travel journey.

The theme for next year is discovering what you can see, smell and hear on your way to school. Find out more about [Living Streets WOW Challenge](#) and register your school's interest [here](#)

Or you can contact our regional coordinator donald.kent@livingstreets.org.uk



Have you used our 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.

The toolkit, created in partnership with NCC's 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:

- 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 STARS News

Accreditations Spring 2026

Well done to **NCEA Bishops Primary School (Excellent Level)** and **Stamfordham Primary School (Good Level)** who renewed their Modeshift STARS Accreditations last term. 🎉



Workshops/Training

Following a recent request, we are planning some in person **STARS Workshops** where staff can come and work on their travel plans for a few hours with support on hand, we'll even throw in some tea and biscuits!

The first session will be at County Hall and if they are popular we can make them a regular event and perhaps look at other locations. **If you are interested, can you complete this short form.**

In addition **Modeshift** are also delivering Some STARS workshops, these could be useful if you are just starting out on STARS as they will be going through the basics, see below for the first session.

STARS Education Masterclass for schools

Wednesday 4 Nov 15:45–16:30 – Getting Started: Assess the situation on STARS

The Masterclass is the first in the 2026/27 academic year series and will introduce the fundamentals of STARS and focus on collecting and recording your baseline data | [Book your place](#)



Hands up mode of travel survey

From the 2026/27 academic year we are moving the hands up survey data collection to the Autumn Term. It makes sense to start the year off with a baseline of how your pupils are travelling to school and then be able to measure any improvements during the year.

As always try to complete your survey on a neutral day or week ie avoid special events like Walk to School Week as these may unfairly affect results and make it more difficult to achieve STARS accreditation in future years.

You can continue to survey pupils at other times of the year if that works better for your school, it's just our main request will now come out to schools in September.

Other 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, let us know if you are interested in delivering this activity.
- An '**Expiring this Term**' column now appears on the **Accreditation Progress tab** showing how many initiatives are due to expire.
- Schools must now 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 a Cycle Count Template.

Have a lovely summer, see you next term

Dates for your diary

Modeshift Summer accreditation Deadline	31 July 2026
Annual Mode of Travel Survey	Autumn Term 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
Walk to School Week Living Streets	tbc May 2027
Great Big Green Week	tbc June 2027
Clean Air Day	tbc June 2027
Love Northumberland Awards	tbc June 2027
Modeshift Summer accreditation Deadline	31 July 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