

Health benefits of walking and cycling

Walking is the most natural and easy activity. It helps to increase your fitness, stamina, confidence and well-being. It can reduce the risk of heart disease and high blood pressure; it can also control body weight and strengthen bones, giving protection against osteoporosis and arthritis. It's surprising how a walk in the fresh air helps to ease stress and tension during a busy day.

Any walking is better than none, but to get the maximum health benefit it is better to take a brisk walk than a stroll. You should work towards walking for thirty minutes on most days, at a pace which makes you warm and breathe slightly more heavily than normal - you should still be able to talk while walking.

Cycling is an excellent way to keep fit as well as being a cheap, quick and convenient means of transport. The British Medical Association recommends cycling as an ideal low-impact activity suitable for all ages and good for the heart and overall bodily health. Regular cyclists enjoy a fitness level equal to that of a person 10 years younger. It develops stamina and improves muscle strength, circulation and tone in the legs. It can also help you shed excess weight by burning body fat.

Physically active people have half the risk of coronary heart disease and up to a third of the risk of a stroke compared to inactive people.

Code of Conduct

Slow down when approaching pedestrians, ring your bell to let them know you are there, give them plenty of room and stop if necessary.

Saying hello and thank you makes a big difference.

Slow down at junctions and bends where visibility is limited and at bridges along the canal towpath.

Where there is a white dividing line, keep to your side of it, otherwise try to cycle on the left-hand side as far as possible and overtake on the right.

Remember that many people are hard of hearing or visually impaired. Do not assume they can see or hear you.

Check your bike is in good working order, including tyres and brakes, particularly if you've not ridden for a while.

Don't expect to cycle at high speeds on the tow path and on shared-use paths.

Use lights at night. Wearing brightly coloured or fluorescent clothing will make you more visible.

Follow the Waterways Code.

The National Cycle Network

The Blackburn to Great Harwood Rishton & Cycle Route is part of National Cycle Network Route 6. The Network comprises of 10,000 miles of traffic-free routes and traffic-calmed or minor roads. Route 6 will run from London to Keswick.

Hynburn Greenway

Between Whitebirk and Rishton the route is part of the Hynburn Greenway. When complete it will link Whitebirk with Baxenden.

Sustrans

The sustainable transport charity works on practical projects to encourage people to walk and cycle more. As well as the National Cycle Network, these include safe routes to schools

Further Contacts / Websites

Sustrans

Tel: 0845 113 0065

www.sustrans.org.uk

Lancashire County Council

Tel: 01772 534609

www.lancashire.gov.uk

Tourist Information Centre

Blackburn Tel: 01254 53277

Accrington Tel 01254 872595

British Waterways

01923 201120

www.waterscape.com



Now you can cycle all the way from Great Harwood and Rishton to the centre of Blackburn without going on the road.

Blackburn to Rishton and Great Harwood Cycle Route



Part of the National Cycle Network

Now you can cycle all the way from Great Harwood and Rishton to the centre of Blackburn without going on the road. The canal towpath now has a sealed surface, meaning that you can use it all year round without getting muddy.

You can even continue on the canal towpath to Feniscowles on the west side of Blackburn if you wish.

So if you commute from Rishton or Great Harwood every day to Blackburn and want to say goodbye to rush hour queues at the M65 roundabout at Whitebirk, get on your bike and use the towpath instead.

You will feel miles better. With stations at Rishton and Blackburn you can even get the train back if it rains.

The Leeds & Liverpool Canal

Opened in 1816, the 127-mile long canal is one of the longest in Britain. It was originally conceived as a way for Bradford merchants to reach the northwest port of Liverpool and runs through or near some of the most significant industrial towns of the North - Liverpool, Wigan, Preston, Blackburn, Burnley, Bradford and Leeds. The canal played a major part in the development of East Lancashire with mills springing up along its banks in much the same way as industry today congregates round motorway junctions.

Whitebirk on the canal used to be a popular bathing spot. Hot water from the now long gone Whitebirk power station meant that the water was warm enough to swim in all year round. In the 1950s, tug-of-war fights were held annually on a disused swing bridge at Whitebirk. An early use of bicycles on the canal was for the bargeman's mate to cycle ahead of the boat to set up the locks ready for the boat to go through.

Great Harwood Line Loop

Now used by the cycle path from Rishton to Great Harwood, the railway was built to avoid station congestion at Accrington and served the small mill towns of Padiham and Great Harwood. The line was popular with Wakes Weeks Specials, when a whole town used to close down for a week in summer and depart en masse to seaside resorts such as Blackpool, Llandudno or Bridlington. In the 1960s, Dr Beeching decreed that keeping special trains just to be used on holiday weekends was uneconomic and axed the lot, so bringing to an end a way of life.

Blackburn Industrial History

The past prosperity of the cotton industry is recalled in the old mills along the Leeds & Liverpool Canal and the working models of the spinning jenny, the spinning mule and the flying shuttle in the Lewis Museum of Textile Machinery. Blackburn's parish church was raised to cathedral status in 1926 and houses an impressive 13ft sculpture of 'Christ the Worker' in aluminium and black iron.



Great Harwood

