

**Client:** Halfords Automotive  
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**The benefits of  
branded zones**

**Analysis, p32**

## **RETAIL LIFE COMMENT**

# Pedal power is policy progress

Government and business can work together to make health targets a reality, says **David Wild**

“The Government’s stretching policy targets will be challenging to deliver in an environment where the focus is on public debt reduction. In some areas, partnership with business will

make a big difference and I believe the promotion of cycling is one of those.

On health, emissions and congestion, the Government has demanding targets for improvements. It wants to “encourage behaviour change to help people live healthier lives” and it supports an increase in the EU emission reduction target to 30% by 2020.

More cycling will help deliver these policies. If we cycled rather than drove just five miles each week, it would cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2.70 million tonnes per year. That’s a fifth of household car CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the UK. Cycling is also good for you: five miles burns 250 calories and provides healthy cardio vascular exercise.

Cycling is a great leisure activity and it can save consumers money. For the price of a few tanks of petrol they can buy a very good bike that will last many years.

Happily, cycling is becoming ever more popular. The Department for Transport has calculated that in 2008, 4.75bn vehicle km per year were travelled by bicycle, an increase of 0.5bn km from 2007.

In London last week, the Mayor’s cycling revolution introduced 6,000 bikes for hire around the city and has launched cycle superhighways to make cycle commuting easier.

The Cycle to Work scheme is a flagship policy that underpins this change. It encourages employers to loan bicycles to employees as a tax-free benefit and then purchase them at the end of the agreed period. It’s now 10 years old and in that time some 500,000 members have bought a bike. The popularity of the scheme is at an all time high – in 2009 it was the fastest growing employee benefit.

I’d characterise Cycle to Work as the glue that makes many of the coalition’s aspirations around cycling a reality. It’s also a perfect example of Government

and businesses working in partnership as the bike retailers and participating companies do the administration.

**Halfords** has linked up with Evans Cycles and Cyclescheme to form the Cycle to Work Alliance. This body will work with policymakers to harness the scheme as an aid to the Government’s wider objectives on health, climate change and business growth.

We also want to highlight the importance of maintaining the benefits within the scheme, which are central to its continued success. Last week we held a reception in Parliament for policymakers and cycling organisations. The room buzzed with enthusiastic support.

Cycling has a great future and it’s thrilling to be retailing bikes at a time when this machine, once thought rather old-fashioned, is at the centre of change and progress.



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