



Cycle to work – a case study

Rob Palmer, one of Bollington Carbon Revolution group's members, has recently started to cycle to work. This article talks about the benefits Rob and his family have realised since becoming a one car family.

"I recently changed jobs which gave me the opportunity to start cycling to work. I also had a company car which I could give back and get cash instead. I've done this and reckon I am saving myself over £7,000 per year, that's like being paid about £35/day to cycle to work! My wife and small child now have one car, and so far it works fine. Plus I am fitter and more alert at work, and then there are the environmental benefits. Hopefully by reading this, you will consider whether this is an option for you."

Assuming working 40 weeks/year

	Costs (£/year)	Benefits (£/year)
Money		
Car costs		7,700
Fuel		200
Bike kit	200	
Food	200	
Taxis	480	
Overall saving		£ 7,020
Non-financial		
Health	Potential danger	Fitter
Time	Takes longer to cycle/shower/change	Time for exercise every day
Attitude	Bad weather cycling	Good weather cycling
Hassle	Potential bike hassle	Definitely less car hassle
		More alert
		Better for the planet

The benefits

Car savings:

- I have worked out the costs of running my company car (a Passat Diesel Estate), and all including, it was costing me ~£650/month excluding fuel.
- My fuel for commuting (~10 miles to work) was £10 per week
- Less hassle (cleaning it, taxing it, servicing it etc.)

Fitness benefits

- I am much fitter than I used to be. Exercise is built into my routine every day. Now I have a small child, this means I don't feel like I am taking time away from family life in order to keep fit.

Work benefits

- I feel more alert at work, plus my colleagues are impressed!
- My journey is pleasant and I arrive to work in a good mood
- No stressful searching for a car parking space

Environmental benefits

- 0.59 tonnes of carbon dioxide saved
- Less pollutants emitted into the atmosphere, including sulphur dioxide (which causes acid rain) and particulates (which cause respiratory problems)

The costs:

Car costs

- I use my wife's car ~1 day per week and that will cost ~£2 per week in fuel. Since we own, tax and maintain the car anyway, there are no additional costs.

Bike costs

- I am hungrier and I reckon I spend £1 a day more on food at work. You could see this as a benefit as I regularly feel entitled to sticky toffee pudding with custard at lunchtime.
- I reckon I will have to spend £200/year extra on bike kit a year – mechanical kit plus some investment in good quality clothing.

Danger

- There is obviously some additional risk in cycling, but so far so good. I am lucky in that my route does not involve much distance along busy roads. Cycling in the rain isn't much fun, but if you cycle regularly, it ceases to bother you much.

Taxis

- Occasionally we have to take a taxi when both my wife and I need transport. This happens about twice a month, costs so far £40.

Time

- I need extra time each day for cycling, showering and changing takes about 15-20 mins each way. Because of traffic queues, parking, and the lack of need to shower at home, this is a lot less than I expected.

What you need to make it work!

- Showering/locker facilities at work. It really helps to be able to leave a towel, trousers, shoes at work.
- Invest a bit of time to sort out your route/bike/changing facilities.
- A job where you don't need to carry loads of stuff home. I regularly carry a laptop, which is no problem.
- A partner who is willing to negotiate on car use!
- My company car was not good value. However, even if I have a better car deal, once you take into account depreciation, maintenance and tax, there are massive savings to be made.

Conclusion

So why do we need a car at all? With a child and non-cycling partner, we still really need the flexibility of a car. We need to see whether this arrangement works in the winter and when my partner goes back to work. Even if we just manage it for 6 months, we'll have saved about £3000!