



POW
PROTECTOURWINTERS.UK

CLEAN MILES

LOW CARBON TRANSPORT TO THE OUTDOORS FOR ALL

Many people in the outdoor community want to stop climate change, including reducing the carbon footprint of their travel, but current public transport systems create barriers that make this difficult or impossible.



**TRANSPORT IS A MAJOR
FORCE BEHIND CLIMATE
CHANGE AND THE LARGEST
CONTRIBUTOR TO OUTDOOR
SPORTS' CARBON FOOTPRINT.**

It's time to change that.


THE PROTECT OUR WINTERS UK CLEAN MILES CAMPAIGN CALLS FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT WHICH IS MORE AFFORDABLE, RELIABLE, WELL-CONNECTED AND READY FOR ADVENTURE.

It is critical that low carbon travel options are viable solutions so that the outdoor sports sector can reduce emissions.

From October to March 1,805 people signed our Clean Miles petition calling for public transport that's affordable, reliable, well-connected, and designed for adventure. 995 people completed a full survey, sharing their perspectives on the barriers and opportunities to accessing the outdoors through low carbon transport.

The organisations on this page, from sporting bodies to travel companies, support our report and recommendations - demonstrating collective momentum behind creating a more sustainable future for outdoor travel.





"I AM PASSIONATE ABOUT MAKING AS MANY CLIMATE POSITIVE CHANGES AS POSSIBLE, AND TRANSPORT IS SOMETHING THAT IS PART OF EVERYDAY LIFE FOR MILLIONS OF US.

The Clean Miles campaign is highlighting how improvements to public transport can have a huge impact on how easy it could and should be for travel adventures- simple things like having good options to outdoor destinations, which are affordable and accessible, and simple and fair baggage policies."

POW Athlete Alliance member - Laura Deas OLY

PROTECT OUR WINTERS (POW) UK IS AN OUTDOORS CLIMATE ACTION CHARITY, MOBILISING THE OUTDOOR COMMUNITY TO LEAD MEANINGFUL CLIMATE ACTION.

Tens of millions of people take part in outdoor sports and recreation across the UK.

As well as accounting for £25bn of value to the UK economy and 500,000 jobs, spending time outdoors provides mental and physical health benefits, strengthens communities and provides opportunities for deeper connection to nature (*pages 20-25*). But the outdoors is increasingly under threat from climate change—shorter snowsport seasons, more extreme weather, wildfires, and flooding.

◆ **71%**
of international travel is by air

◆ **89%**
of passenger kilometres are travelled by road

◆ **>80%**
Of survey recipients have travelled to mainland Europe without flying. Most popular were ferry (58%), train (58%) and car (54%)

◆ **83%**
believe train is significantly or somewhat more expensive than flying to Europe

There's a massive opportunity here to create cleaner routes to the outdoors, lower carbon emissions and make the outdoors more accessible to more people. This report details our Clean Miles campaign to do so.

Barriers

Protect Our Winters UK has researched how the outdoor community travel to the outdoors, the obstacles they face when trying to travel using public transport and what kind of solutions they want to see, including via survey and subsequent petition. It has also researched the transport system directly, the implications of the ongoing rail nationalisation, and what isn't yet covered by the Government's recent Better Connected transport strategy. Issues with current transport are highlighted here, and are expanded in *pages 8-13, and in more detail page 26 onwards*.

995 people completed POW UK's survey, sharing their perspectives on the barriers and opportunities to accessing low carbon transport in the UK to get outdoors.

THE TOP 5 MAIN BARRIERS TO CHOOSING PUBLIC TRANSPORT GIVEN WERE:

- ◆ Cost of tickets (71%)
- ◆ Lack of direct routes (57%)
- ◆ Problems carrying equipment (56%)
- ◆ Public transport not reaching destination (56%)
- ◆ Limited timetable/frequency (53%)

RECOMMENDATIONS

This report draws together our findings, identifying systemic barriers and presenting five key recommendations for our various transport operators to enable sustainable, accessible, and low-impact travel to the outdoors:

1.5 TONNES

average annual travel footprint per outdoor sport participant

1

OPTIONS TO OUTDOOR DESTINATIONS, WHICH ARE AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE

Including expanded routes (1A), and schemes to reduce costs for frequent travellers, such as universal travelcards (1B).

2

BETTER BOOKING AND DIGITAL SYSTEMS

Includes recommendations for a promised new Great British Railways booking & information system, such as better visibility of 'London International CIV' tickets (2C).

3

BETTER SPACE FOR SKIS, SNOWBOARDS, BIKES AND LARGE EQUIPMENT

From easy retrofit options to fit more types of bikes (3A) to rolling stock decisions with nationalised rail (3C & 3D).

4

SIMPLER, CONSISTENT AND FAIRER BAGGAGE POLICIES

Such as joining the 'Hop On Next Available Train' Railteam agreement (4B).

5

CLEARER INFORMATION ABOUT WHAT IS POSSIBLE FOR EQUIPMENT CARRIAGE.

With clearer more easily found information across all forms of transport and within booking systems.

**BY ADDRESSING THESE GAPS,
WE CAN MAKE OUTDOOR SPORT
BOTH CLIMATE-FRIENDLY AND
UNIVERSALLY ACCESSIBLE.**

**"Improve public transport links to and from
green and blue spaces, including increased
frequency, expanded routes and affordability."**

**Recommendation from APPG for Outdoor Recreation
& Access to Nature, Outdoors For All Report, 2025**



BARRIERS

HOW PUBLIC TRANSPORT IS FAILING THE OUTDOOR COMMUNITY

Many people in the outdoor community want to stop climate change, including reducing the carbon footprint of their travel, but current public transport systems create barriers that make this difficult or impossible.

BARRIERS



OUR VISION



WHY ACT



RAIL

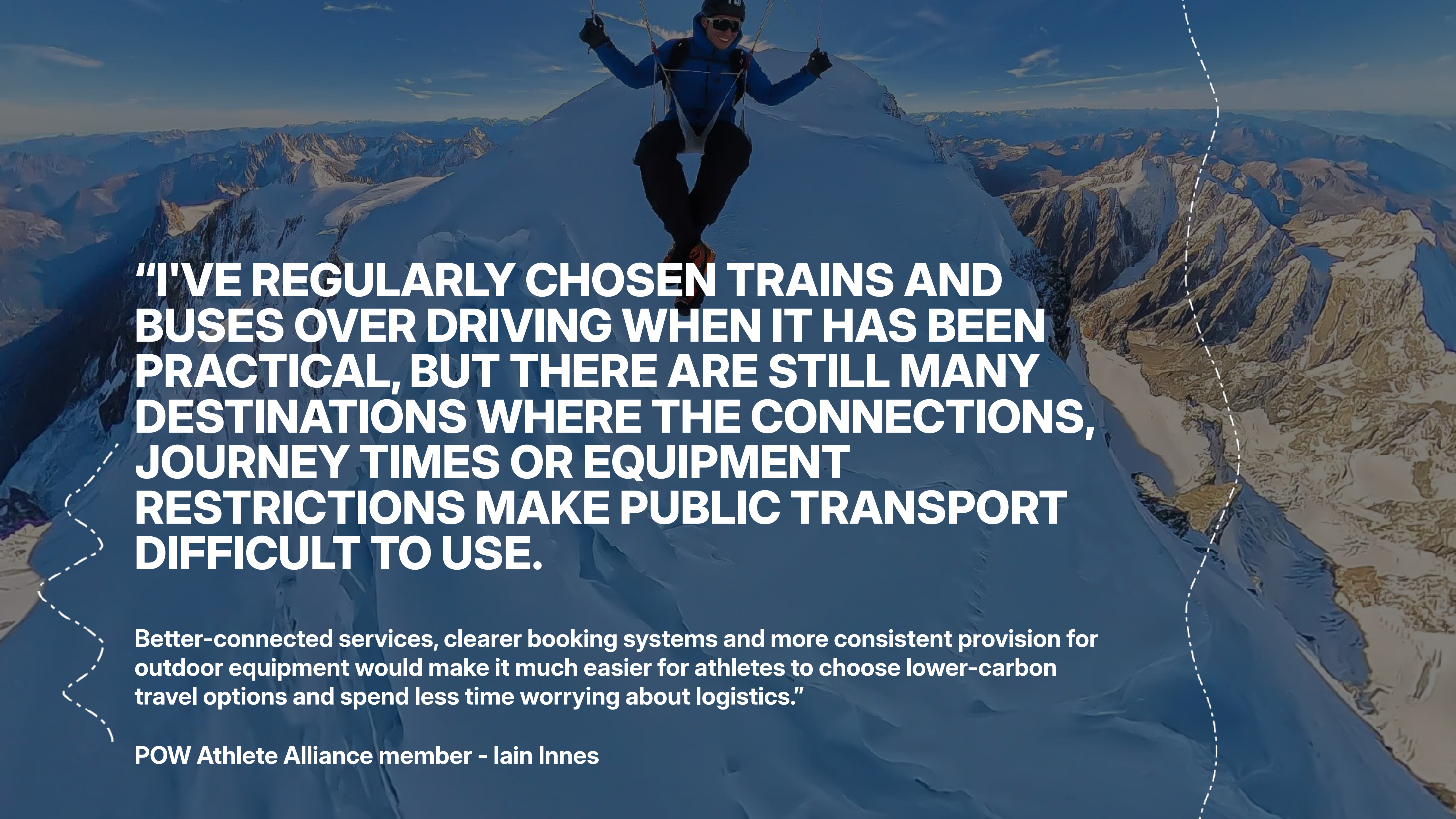


WITH BIKES



OTHER





"I'VE REGULARLY CHOSEN TRAINS AND BUSES OVER DRIVING WHEN IT HAS BEEN PRACTICAL, BUT THERE ARE STILL MANY DESTINATIONS WHERE THE CONNECTIONS, JOURNEY TIMES OR EQUIPMENT RESTRICTIONS MAKE PUBLIC TRANSPORT DIFFICULT TO USE.

Better-connected services, clearer booking systems and more consistent provision for outdoor equipment would make it much easier for athletes to choose lower-carbon travel options and spend less time worrying about logistics."

POW Athlete Alliance member - Iain Innes

OUR CLEAN MILES CAMPAIGN (RESEARCH AND SURVEY) HAS IDENTIFIED THE MAIN OBSTACLES:

TAKING SPORTS GEAR ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT IS PROBLEMATIC

Public transport is often not accessible for people travelling with bikes, skis, snowboards, surfboards, water sports equipment, mountaineering gear, or adaptive equipment for disabled passengers.

Existing trains and buses generally lack dedicated, clearly marked storage, and available space is limited. Vertical hooks, cramped luggage areas, or incompatible storage designs make it difficult to transport larger equipment, heavier bikes, or e-bikes. Rules for carrying equipment vary widely between operators due to differing interpretations of National Rail regulations.

Internationally, inconsistent or frequently changing rules add further barriers. For example, SNCF in France bans snowboards over 130cm, and Eurostar now requires ice axes and crampons to be placed in booked luggage, limiting flexibility and increasing cost. Water sports boards are generally prohibited on most services.

BOOKING SYSTEMS ARE COMPLICATED

Booking systems for public transport frequently fail to accommodate outdoor travellers' needs. Many people cannot book bikes through e-tickets, and processes for securing end-to-end international journeys are confusing and inconsistent. These barriers make sustainable travel unnecessarily complicated and discourage people from leaving their cars at home.



"As athletes, many of us want to reduce the climate impact of our travel and choose public transport wherever possible. In practice, however, travelling to outdoor destinations with specialist equipment can be difficult. Whether it's skis, climbing gear or paragliding equipment, inconsistent baggage policies, limited storage space and unclear information often make journeys unnecessarily complicated."

POW Athlete Alliance member - Iain Innes



**71%
OF PEOPLE REPORTED HIGH
COSTS AS A MAJOR BARRIER TO
USING PUBLIC TRANSPORT FOR
OUTDOOR TRIPS.**

MANY OUTDOOR DESTINATIONS ARE UNREACHABLE BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT

71%

of the wider general public said cheaper fares would make them more likely to travel by rail (1)

RURAL AREAS, WHERE MANY OUTDOOR DESTINATIONS ARE LOCATED, HAVE HIGH CAR DEPENDENCE, MAKING LOW-CARBON TRAVEL OPTIONS CRITICAL FOR BOTH CLIMATE AND ACCESSIBILITY.

“Last-mile” challenges exacerbate these issues.

Private car users consistently enjoy better proximity to green spaces and sports facilities, while public transport and walking leave many areas beyond a 20-minute travel threshold.

- ◆ Cost of tickets (71%)
- ◆ Public transport not reaching destination (56%)
- ◆ Problems carrying equipment (56%)
- ◆ Limited timetable/frequency (53%)
- ◆ 50% say public transport not being reliable enough is a key barrier

Public transport is expensive

Current rail fares make sustainable travel less competitive compared to highly polluting alternatives like car or air travel.

For international trips, such as travelling to the Alps by rail, the UK leg of the journey can be prohibitively expensive. Booking restrictions and timing issues further limit affordability and practicality.

Public transport is unreliable

Our community frequently reports concerns about missed connections or being stranded, which is particularly problematic for travellers carrying equipment and heading to remote destinations where certainty of arrival is critical.

72%

of large attractions are over a mile from a train station



84%

**SAY PUBLIC TRANSPORT DOESN'T
REACH THEIR DESTINATIONS
EITHER AT ALL, DIRECTLY, OR
FREQUENTLY ENOUGH.**

OUR VISION

**A SOCIETY WHERE THE
CLEANEST WAY TO GET
OUTDOORS IS ALSO
THE EASIEST**

There is a better way to get outdoors - let's make it happen.
Our recommendations to ensure travel to the outdoors is not harming
the very environment we need to thrive fall into 5 key areas.

BARRIERS



OUR VISION



WHY ACT



RAIL



WITH BIKES



OTHER



1

OPTIONS TO OUTDOOR DESTINATIONS, WHICH ARE AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE

Cost and route viability are the most cited barriers to public transport use in our survey.

Public transport is often not accessible for people travelling with bikes, skis, snowboards, surfboards, water sports equipment, mountaineering gear, or adaptive equipment for disabled passengers. For international journeys too, for those who don't live near London, the UK leg of the journey can be the difference in the overall cost being competitive to inhibitive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **1A.** "Improve public transport links to and from green and blue spaces, including increased frequency, expanded routes and affordability" - as per APPG for Outdoor Recreation & Access to Nature's 2025 Outdoors For All Report (headline recommendation 10).
- **1B.** Introduce schemes to reduce costs for frequent travellers, such as universal travelcards or 'rail mile' benefits.
- **1C.** Ensure pricing for domestic legs of international journeys is not a barrier to end-to-end sustainable travel - in the absence of cheaper overall pricing, this could include making 'London International CIV' tickets cheaper.
- **1D.** Simplify advance booking and fare structures so travellers can plan low-carbon trips without timing or cost penalties, (as committed in the Better Connected Strategy).



2

BETTER BOOKING AND DIGITAL SYSTEMS

At the moment, booking systems for public transport are unnecessarily complicated, especially if you're trying to book to take equipment with you.

Booking international journeys presents further challenges to guarantee your journey in the event of earlier train delays.

Recommendation:

Improve public transport links to and from green and blue spaces, including increased frequency, expanded routes and affordability.

APPG for Outdoor Recreation & Access to Nature, Outdoors For All Report, 2025

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **2A.** Ensure all digital ticketing platforms allow bike reservations, and other large-equipment if necessary, as standard, not an optional or hidden feature, and can be processed via E-Tickets.
- **2B.** Introduce consistent, clear booking mechanisms across all routes, including GBR's new rail information and ticketing system.
- **2C.** Better visibility of the 'London International CIV' tickets
- **2D.** Guarantee end-to-end international travel without relying on obscure ticket types, for example by joining Railteam's "Hop On The Next Available Train" agreement or creating an equivalent partnership with Eurostar
- **2E.** Consider provisions for travellers with virtual tickets in case of battery/device failure issues (allowing 'M-Tickets' not just 'E-Tickets' to be moved to a new device, and/or allowing ticket inspectors to look-up the ticket via personal details).



3

BETTER SPACE FOR SKIS, SNOWBOARDS, BIKES AND LARGE EQUIPMENT

In our survey, equipment carriage emerged as a significant barrier to using low-carbon transport, with many citing poor or unsuitable onboard storage.

"My partner is blind, we can only cycle using a tandem bicycle. Trains, and buses/trucks designed to transport cyclists through tunnels and across bridges (e.g. Silverlink tunnel / Dartford Crossing etc), should have capacity to carry tandem bicycles."

- Survey respondent

RECOMMENDATIONS

National rail

- **3A.** Retrofit existing stock to carry all bikes, in particular providing larger bike hooks
- **3B.** Retrofit space where possible for flexible ski, snowboard and surfboard storage, and adaptive equipment, including horizontal storage options for heavier equipment.
- **3C.** On future rolling stock include more dedicated, clearly marked storage options for large luggage and sports equipment. This could in some cases be mixed usage space used as standing room when not in use.
- **3D.** On future rolling stock, when providing more spaces for bikes in particular in areas of high demand including from tourism as committed in the Better Connected strategy - ensure such spaces are suitable for all types of bike and don't require significant lifting.
- **3E.** Ensure skis snowboards and surfboards are permitted across the network when stored appropriately, such as in sleeves alongside standard backpacks.

International rail

- **3F.** Clarify cross-border standards to ensure fair and proportionate carriage rules.
- **3G.** Resume assembled bike carriage on Eurostar routes to other destinations and reduce bike space costs with advance booking.

Bus and coach

- **3H.** Facilitate bikes carriage on buses for rural routes - either onboard or locking racks on the front (local Councils and the Department for Transport, including in the forthcoming Opportunity Mission Toolkit)
- **3i.** Coach lines, permit carriage of bikes, skis and boards

Everywhere

- **3J.** Support inclusive travel by explicitly accommodating adaptive sports equipment, in partnership with organisations such as Disability Snowsport UK.
- **3K.** Integrate any baggage couriership services to ensure that costs are minimised when purchasing with a ticket, station collection points are standardised, and emissions from these services transparently reported. Travel companies e.g. tour operators should offer these services where baggage is a barrier.

4

SIMPLER, CONSISTENT AND FAIRER POLICIES

When it comes to ticket restrictions and taking equipment, rules and policies vary with different travel providers and across borders, making it difficult to manage delays and equipment bookings on multi-leg journeys.

In our survey, respondents reported concerns about the reliability of public transport, which becomes a bigger issue if you're carrying specialist equipment and heading to remote destinations.

"We need simpler and more universal approaches to rules about taking bikes on trains - currently it is complicated to find out and comply with different requirements of different train companies."

- Survey respondent

RECOMMENDATIONS

UK Government / Great British Railways:

- **4A.** Develop clear, proportionate cross-border standards to ensure fairness and accessibility.
- **4B.** Join the Hop On Next Available Train (HOTNAT) agreement or establish a Great British Railways equivalent arrangement to provide clear, automatic connection protection for UK-Europe rail journeys.
- **4C.** Standardise equipment rules across operators through Great British Railways, avoid lowest-common-denominator solutions, and ensure consistency across multi-leg journeys.

SNCF:

- **4D.** Revise the snowboard policy to a fair, size-based rule compatible with skis and other gear.

Eurostar:

- **4E.** Simplify and reduce restrictions on mountaineering equipment (ice axes, crampons) and applying consistent rules across routes.

5

CLEARER INFORMATION ABOUT EQUIPMENT CARRIAGE

Our survey showed that people cannot find reliable information about what equipment they can carry or whether additional fees apply.

Booking systems don't always include options for equipment carriage and rules change frequently making it difficult to know exactly what you can take and where there are restrictions. This becomes a bigger issue if you're carrying specialist equipment and heading to remote destinations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Great British Railways, Scotrail, Transport for Wales Rail:

- 5A. Ensure the promised new information and booking system provides accurate, accessible, and up-to-date guidance on equipment carriage.
- 5B. Clearly communicate on websites and booking platforms what can be carried, any restrictions, and associated costs, including for cross-border journeys.

Rail operator and/or outdoor groups:

- 5C. Create supporting "how-to" resources, working with mountaineering, cycling, and disability organisations, to guide travellers on equipment transport. POW UK intends to do this in the coming months.

Eurostar (and others):

- 5D. Ensure that ice axes, crampons, skis, snowboards, and bikes are listed with clear instructions, pricing, and advance booking options on Eurostar and other operator systems



WHY ACT

THE CASE FOR LOW-CARBON TRAVEL TO THE OUTDOORS

Outdoor recreation plays a huge, vital role in tourism and local economies. Many people in the outdoor community want to stop climate change, including reducing the carbon footprint of their travel, but current public transport systems create barriers that make this difficult or impossible.

BARRIERS



OUR VISION



WHY ACT



RAIL



WITH BIKES



OTHER



OUTDOOR SPORTS ENCOMPASS TENS OF MILLIONS OF UK PEOPLE

Tens of millions of people participate in outdoor sports across the UK. Our research shows that people who take part in outdoor activities are motivated to care for the environment [\(2\)](#). However, even when self-reported attitudes show a willingness to reduce environmental impact, outdoor sports enthusiasts struggle to travel in low impact ways [\(3\)](#).

There is public appetite for low-carbon travel solutions—but barriers in affordability, booking systems, and equipment carriage prevent people from making sustainable choices.

THE ECONOMIC CASE

Rural areas including the Highlands, Cornwall, the Lake District, and National Parks in Wales benefit from outdoor sports particularly, with the highest density of outdoor recreation businesses.

The economic impact of winter sports in Scotland illustrates the value of outdoor recreation, underlining the importance of accessible transport to local economies.

40% of British tourists prefer active vacations

We explore this in this video of our visit to Cairngorm Mountain



£8.4BN visitor spend generated

- ◆ **£20.1m** net GVA generated by Scottish ski resorts (2022)
- ◆ **£15.3m** in wages supported by the sector
- ◆ **510** full-time equivalent jobs created
- ◆ **89,473** visitors across five ski resorts
- ◆ **20%** of guests were overnight visitors

A blurred image of a train moving at night, with lights visible through the windows and on the exterior. The background is dark, and the train's motion is captured with horizontal streaks.

**29.3 MILLION
ANNUAL JOURNEYS LINKED
TO OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES**

HEALTH AND EQUALITY

INEQUALITY IN ACCESS

Despite its benefits, access to outdoor spaces is not equal. Evidence from the 2019 Landscapes Review shows that older people, young people, lower-income communities, disabled people, and those from Black, Asian, and ethnic minority backgrounds are far less likely to visit protected landscapes.

These groups are also more likely to lack private cars and are disproportionately affected by poor public transport provision, reinforcing barriers to participation and enjoyment of outdoor spaces.

We want to be clear, provision to make public transport easier to reach the outdoors should not come at the expense of space available for people with disabilities. We support changes which protect the rights and needs of disabled passengers, including those who want to use trains to reach the outdoors with their equipment.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BENEFITS

Outdoor recreation is crucial for mental and physical health. In England, half of women and a third of men are not active enough to maintain good health. Sustainable transport enables people to access outdoor activity safely, promoting exercise, stress relief, and mental wellbeing.

Reducing car journeys and flights further improves air quality, benefiting everyone along the route and at destinations.



£8.4bn

annual NHS savings from increased outdoor activity and prevention of chronic illness

30,000

UK deaths per year linked to air pollution. (4)

THE ENVIRONMENTAL CASE

Transport is the largest contributor to emissions in outdoor sport and a major source of carbon globally. It varies hugely with access - emissions from travel within National Parks varies between 12 and 63% of the total visitor emissions! (5)

Switching to low-carbon travel, particularly rail, can dramatically reduce these impacts. Rail offers a clear opportunity to cut transport-related emissions while maintaining access to outdoor activities. Improving transport for bikes and sports equipment also supports wider sustainable behaviour, including everyday commuting by bicycle.

Beyond carbon, current transport patterns harm the natural environment. Vehicle use contributes particulate pollution, including microplastics from tyre and brake wear, much of which enters rivers and oceans, exacerbating threats to wildlife and even accelerating Arctic ice melt.

8%

of global emissions come from tourism

>50%

of the carbon emissions in the Lake District are from transport (6)

- ◆ **38%** of household microplastic pollution comes from transport (mainly car tyres & road wear)
- ◆ **28%** of ocean microplastics are from tyre wear. (ref for both)
- ◆ **65%** correctly recognised trains as a far better climate choice (offering at least 75% lower emissions than flying) in our survey.
- ◆ **>1 tonne CO₂e** travel emissions per outdoor sport participant
- ◆ **80–90%** less CO₂ rail travel emits compared to flying on similar routes
- ◆ **Tens of millions** of tonnes CO₂e caused from UK outdoor sport travel annually

RAIL

TRAVEL IN THE UK AND TO EUROPE

Rail nationalisation refers to bringing passenger rail services back under public ownership and control. In Scotland and Wales, this has already taken place, with ScotRail and Transport for Wales operating as publicly owned rail providers.

BARRIERS



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WHY ACT



RAIL



WITH BIKES



OTHER



A high-speed train, primarily black with a yellow front panel, is stopped at a station platform. The platform is covered by a large, ornate, dark-colored roof structure supported by white columns. The scene is dimly lit, suggesting dusk or dawn, with warm lights from the station building and platform lamps. A sign with the number '2' is visible on the platform. The train's front window is prominent, and its headlights are visible at the bottom. The overall atmosphere is quiet and somewhat somber.

RAIL TRAVEL IN THE UK

In England, nationalisation is now underway through the creation of Great British Railways (GBR), established through the Government's Rail Reform Bill. By the end of 2026, the majority of rail journeys across Great Britain are expected to take place on government-operated services.

CONSEQUENCES OF NATIONALISATION

THIS TRANSITION REPRESENTS A MAJOR STRUCTURAL SHIFT IN HOW THE RAIL NETWORK IS MANAGED.

In theory, nationalisation should enable better coordination across routes, including more convenient interchange times between trains and potentially buses. Wales has already demonstrated improvements in service integration under public ownership. Greater central oversight may also allow more strategic influence over fare structures, service patterns, and rolling stock specifications—although trains themselves are not always directly owned, which can limit flexibility.

However, public awareness of these changes—and what they mean in practice—remains low. There is little understanding of how reforms could affect issues such as affordability, equipment carriage, and service standards. There is also a risk that efforts to standardise rules across the network could result in “lowest common denominator” policies, particularly around equipment carriage, potentially reducing flexibility rather than improving it.



AFFORDABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

The wider context of the rail network highlights both opportunities and challenges. Rail travel in Great Britain is heavily concentrated in London and the South East, where inter-regional flows are strongest. Other regions rely more on shorter, local journeys, with comparatively limited cross-region connectivity.

Whilst the government has signalled there won't be large immediate cuts to a lines' ticket prices as each is nationalised, as there are less private profits being taken out, MPs hope over time costs will reduce. This regional imbalance has implications for affordability and access, including for international travel for travellers outside London — who must rely on costly domestic travel legs to reach major international departure points. Our survey reflects these disparities:

- ◆ **~1/3** of respondents in England believe rail to Europe costs over 2x flying
- ◆ **~1/2** of respondents outside England hold the same view
- ◆ **>2x perception gap** English respondents are more likely to believe rail is cheaper or price-comparable than those in Scotland or Wales

OTHER UK RAIL ISSUES

THERE'S NOT ENOUGH SPACE FOR SKIS, BOARDS AND OTHER EQUIPMENT

On some routes, skis, snowboards and surfboards are not permitted at all, or are only allowed at certain times of day.

For example on Northern Rail skis/snowboards allowed if space usually in bike racks, whilst on GWR it's always at Train Manager discretion. Surfboards are banned at all times on GWR intercity trains, covering the most popular area for surfing in the UK. Bikes also have carriage issues which are covered in their own section of the report.

We are concerned with nationalisation that rules will be simplified to the lowest common denominator, making moving around with such equipment significantly harder. We need to see fair policies that define how and when they should and should not be carried. Even having to reserve in advance, travel off peak only or even buy a second seat for larger surfboards would be preferable to a flat 'no'! Such measures would also help those carrying other non outdoor sport packages.

Baggage courier services such as Luggage Buddy (used by Eurostar and LNER) can bypass these issues but introduce additional cost, logistical complexity, and potentially higher emissions, particularly for single-item or expedited deliveries.



DELAYED, CANCELLED OR CROWDED TRAINS PERFORMANCE AND PASSENGER EXPERIENCE ALSO SHAPE PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN RAIL

- ◆ **12.2%** of complaints are due to overcrowding
- ◆ **19.3%** of passenger complaints relate to punctuality and reliability (most common issue)
- ◆ **84–85%** Rail punctuality - which has remained relatively stable (excluding pandemic years)
- ◆ **8.3 million** Delay compensation claims in 2024–25

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE

As rail nationalisation progresses, there is a clear opportunity to address these structural weaknesses. Reform must not only reorganise governance, but also improve reliability, affordability, integration, and passenger experience—ensuring that public ownership delivers a rail network that supports low-carbon travel and accessible journeys to outdoor destinations across the whole of the UK.

Aviation dominance is systemically embedded through pricing structures, infrastructure, industry norms and commercial incentives, as well as being socially normalised. Therefore, enabling a modal shift requires coordinated system-level intervention rather than isolated individual or organisational initiatives.

Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership research with Travel by B-Corp

RAIL TRAVEL BETWEEN UK & EUROPE

Rail offers one of the most effective lower-carbon alternatives to flying between the UK and mainland Europe.

However, while infrastructure and operator interest are growing, practical barriers remain. (One is the cost of the domestic leg, as discussed in the previous section.)

12%

Intent to travel on ski trip by rail

CURRENT SERVICES

EUROSTAR AND LESHUTTLE

Eurostar currently operates direct high-speed services from London to Paris, Lille, Brussels, Rotterdam and Amsterdam. It also offers the Eurostar Snow service, which provides a convenient route to the French Alps with a straightforward change.

However, this service has severely limited capacity, and no summer equivalent.

While Eurostar permits sports equipment, the rules for items such as bikes and ice axes can be confusing, may incur additional fees, and have changed over time and by destination. This inconsistency creates uncertainty for outdoor travellers.

In addition to passenger rail, LeShuttle (Eurotunnel) transports ~8 million people in vehicles and on bikes between Folkestone and Calais annually, though it remains car-dependent for most users.

- ◆ **2%**
actual ski trip travel by rail [\(8\)](#)
- ◆ **71%**
UK international passengers travel by air
- ◆ **1,800 → 5,000**
passengers per hour planned capacity increase at St Pancras International



EXPANSION PLANS AND MARKET INTEREST:

The wider context of the rail network highlights both opportunities and challenges.

There is growing commercial and infrastructure interest in expanding UK–Europe rail connections. New direct routes to Geneva have been proposed for around 2030. There’s a recent UK–Switzerland governmental deal to enable a direct rail connection [\(7\)](#)

NEW OPERATORS ARE ENTERING THE MARKET:

- New direct routes to Geneva have been proposed for around 2030. There’s a recent UK–Switzerland governmental deal to enable a direct rail connection
- New operators are entering the market:
 - A. Trenitalia plans to launch services from 2029
 - B. Virgin Rail is developing services aiming for 2030, and has permission for depot use in London
 - C. Renfe has also indicated interest in entering the market (preliminary proposals)

London St Pancras Highspeed (the UK’s high-speed rail infrastructure operator) and Eurotunnel (operator of the Channel Tunnel) have signed a cooperation agreement to increase high-speed connections between London and continental Europe. Planned expansion signals significant long-term potential for rail to compete more effectively with short-haul aviation.

RELIABILITY AND ONWARD TRAVEL PROTECTION

PERCEIVED RELIABILITY REMAINS A MAJOR BARRIER.

Our community consistently reports concern about missing connections and being stranded due to delays. For outdoor travellers—often carrying equipment and heading to remote destinations—certainty of arrival is critical.

Across much of Europe, this issue is addressed through the Railteam “Hop On The Next Available Train” (HOTNAT) agreement, which allows passengers to board the next available service if they miss a connection due to delay. Eurostar participates in HOTNAT, but UK domestic operators are not members.

Currently, onward journey protection between UK and European services is only guaranteed if passengers purchase:

- A) a single through-ticket, or**
- B) a ticket to or from “London International (CIV)”.**

These ticket types are largely unknown to the public and difficult to purchase in practice. This complexity undermines confidence in rail as a seamless alternative to flying.

Recommendation:

Robust contingencies should be in place to address any delays in [aviation] decarbonisation

Climate Change Committee [\(9\)](#)



WIDER EUROPEAN CONTEXT

41%

book ski trips more than **6 months in advance** (10)

Beyond Eurostar, there is a strong network of European rail operators that connect to outdoor destinations, including Deutsche Bahn (DB), SNCF, ÖBB and SBB. These networks already provide extensive access to mountain, coastal and rural regions across Europe.

Improving integration between UK rail and these operators would unlock substantial low-carbon travel potential for the British outdoor community. In particular, there's disparity between the ~6 month booking horizon for Eurostar trains and the ~3 month booking horizon that others such as SNCF operate. This makes multi-leg travel difficult to plan, and causes problems for outdoor sports travel such as snowsports, where the majority of trips are booked more than 3 months in advance (11).

French operator SNCF currently states that snowboards over 130cm are not allowed. Whilst research by Snowcarbon shows this rule largely isn't enforced, this acts as a barrier to snowboarders deciding how to travel.

"I was delayed almost 24h on my return from the Alps on the Eurostar from Brussels this summer due to ice axes."

James



WITH BIKES

GRINDING THE GEARS: WHY IS IT SO HARD TO GET TO THE TRAILHEAD BY TRAIN WITH A BIKE?

This section highlights the barriers and evidences our recommendations regarding bikes.

BARRIERS



OUR VISION



WHY ACT



RAIL



WITH BIKES



OTHER



Inverness
: Scotland
Inverness
13:17:25

On line
On line

BIKE PROVISION ON TRAINS VARIES SIGNIFICANTLY ACROSS THE UK AND EUROPE

It makes sense for services to differ between commuter services and long-distance routes, but overall the situation in the UK is poor.

SOME UK ROUTES PROVIDE NO DEDICATED BIKE SPACES AT ALL OR PERMIT ONLY FOLDING BIKES

The European Cyclists' Federation (ECF) Cyclists Love Trains Report 2025 found that the UK, including Eurostar, rank among the worst countries surveyed for both the quantity of bike spaces and the cost of reservations. [\(12\)](#)

By contrast, new EU legislation requires trains to provide at least four bike spaces and to scale provision to meet route demand. There are strong examples of good practice: France's SNCF "Train Vélo Loire" provides up to 83 bike spaces in summer, demonstrating what is possible when provision reflects user demand.



BIKE-SPACE PROVISION THAT FALLS FLAT

Even where UK bike spaces exist, they often do not match what people need.

Many modern bikes—particularly those used by the outdoor community—have wider tyres, deeper rims, or broader handlebars than assumed in older carriage designs. On services such as GWR, LNER and TPE, small vertical hooks can struggle to accommodate even road bikes, let alone gravel, mountain or touring bikes. Handlebar width assumptions are frequently too narrow.

Vertical hanging storage also creates accessibility challenges. Lifting heavier bikes—especially e-bikes—into upright positions can be difficult or impossible for some passengers, including smaller or less strong riders. Overcrowding compounds the issue, with complaints about insufficient space among the most common causes of dissatisfaction across the rail network.



Train Vélo Loire

BUMPS IN THE ROAD WITH POLICIES, NETWORKS AND BOOKING SYSTEMS

E-bike policies are inconsistent. TfL ban non-folding e-bikes across their entire transport network. Most other operators now allow purchased e-bikes but not all allow converted e-bikes. Public awareness of rules is low.

Bike reservations are another barrier. Systems vary widely between operators. This creates friction and uncertainty when planning multi-leg journeys. They are sometimes unavailable with E-tickets, requiring physical ticket collection.

Eurostar's bike policy creates complexity for international journeys. Bikes are permitted assembled to and from Brussels but must be boxed for Paris and are not allowed at all to Lille, Amsterdam or Rotterdam. Eurostar's bike carriage fees—£45+ each way—are significantly higher than other operators according to the Cyclists Love Trains report, which also describes its booking system as outdated and difficult to use.

Network design can also create barriers. London-centric routing often requires crossing the capital to change trains, yet TfL does not allow non-folding bikes. As one survey respondent noted: "I have to go via London and cross over the city — not nice with a bike."



Bike store owner Sally Devlin told us in our video visit to Aviemore that

"trains are totally the missing link"



SBB Intercity. Source: [CyclingThread](#)



Avanti West Coast Pendolino. Source: [liamness on Reddit](#)

SHIFTING GEARS - SOLUTIONS THAT ARE WORKING

There are, however, positive examples. In the UK, Avanti West Coast's Pendolino trains provide good horizontal bike storage. Austria's ÖBB and Germany's DB regional services also demonstrate practical, user-friendly approaches. ScotRail's Highland Explorer is a standout example, providing 20 bike spaces with dedicated seating and branding itself as the UK's first "active travel carriage." Transport for Wales has increased bike provision on the Heart of Wales line from two spaces to twelve.

Outside rail, many countries—including the USA, Canada, New Zealand and Germany—fit bike racks to the front of buses. This could be transformative for rural "last mile" connections and cycling tourism in the UK.

OTHER BUS, COACH AND FERRY TRAVEL

This report so far focused on rail due to nationalisation being in progress - but what about the other modes of public transport, which often provide a more affordable option?

BARRIERS



OUR VISION



WHY ACT



RAIL



WITH BIKES



OTHER





"JUST PUT BIKE RACKS ON THE FRONT AND BACK OF BUSES LIKE IN VANCOUVER AND FRENCH RESORTS LIKE MORZINE!"

- Survey respondent

Buses with bike attachment points on front are used in New Zealand, Canada, USA and more. This would be particularly useful for rural routes which cover longer distances where a cyclist may not be up to cycling the distance. Locking points can be provided, and/or have them secure the bike automatically when not at a stop.

LOCAL BUSES

Ability to transport bikes when travelling by bus could be a great help for longer distances in rural areas such as to outdoor destinations, and when requiring a bike unsuitable itself for road travel.

Bikes on the front of buses would be fantastic to trial in the UK after being proven abroad. There is a legislative blocker to this, so the government will need to act to enable this option.

Borders Buses, Scotland Now have 2-4 bike spaces inside buses.



Plans for a 'mini Switzerland' approach in the Peak District pushed forward Hope Valley Climate Action have been greenlit to begin in 2027, to better coordinate bus and train times to on the hour, this will hopefully serve as a model for improving rural transport around the country which is often very limited currently with 71% of rural people saying "I could not get by without my car." [\(13\)](#)



The Aviemore Adventurer

Runs roughly hourly through the day, it has a specially fitted baggage compartment for skis, snowboards and bikes.

CASE STUDIES

Twiliner

New sleeper route across Europe with beds. However they "haven't yet enabled the transport of special luggage" such as bikes and skis.

We hope to see this added soon.

It would also be good to see sleeper coaches for longest distance routes across the UK and into Europe.

Ferries

Running from UK to France and Spain, these work particularly well for road cyclists, but can otherwise require cars due to inefficient land public transport connections.

There are ongoing discussions about whether a route from Newcastle to Norway is profitable enough to reopen.

This would be a great option.

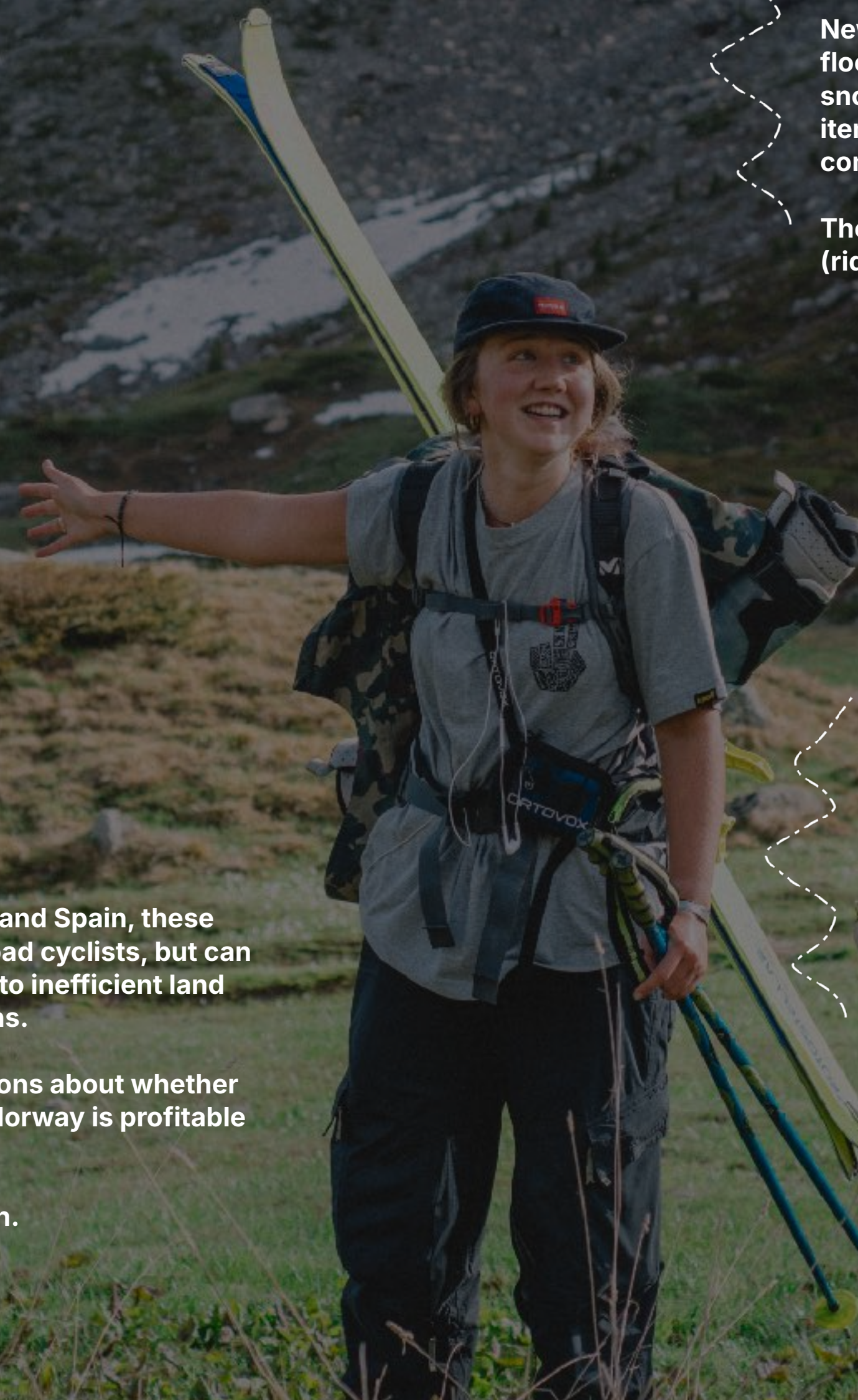
Ember

New electric bus: Their buses with an under-floor hold can accommodate skis, snowboards, and surfboards, provided the items fit within the physical dimensions of the compartment.

They suggest check in advance (ride@ember.to) if in doubt.

National Express & FlixBus

Established coach providers offer low-cost travel options. Baggage can be a barrier however - FlixBus allows pre-booking of standard bikes and large bags such as for skis. On National Express however it is at the drivers discretion.





THANK YOU TO ALL THOSE THAT HAVE SUPPORTED THE CAMPAIGN SO FAR.

Protect Our Winters UK is a registered charity.
Our mission is to rally the outdoor community to lead meaningful climate action.

This report outlines the findings and recommendations of the Clean Miles campaign - to make public transport affordable, reliable, and fit for adventure.

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Get involved with POW UK by following us on social media and our newsletter, and supporting our active campaigns!

