

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
6TH SEPTEMBER 2007

CYCLE LANES SCRUTINY TASK FORCE

Purpose of Report

1. To update Members on progress, reporting specifically on the recommendations from the Task Group's report.

Background

2. Cycle Lanes were identified as a cross cutting area for scrutiny by the "Listening to Our Communities Project Board" in 2005. The Cycle Lanes Scrutiny Task Group was established to scrutinise Wiltshire's cycle lanes under the following terms of reference:
 - To conduct a detailed review on Cycle Lanes (including facilities and routes)
 - In undertaking the review, to focus on the Key Targets and Objectives as set out in the Wiltshire Strategic Board Document 'Creating a County Fit for Our Children', namely to improve facilities for cyclists, particularly in urban areas.
3. At a meeting on 15th March 2006 the Final Report of the Task Group was approved by this Committee. The report outlined a number of recommendations to be taken forward. The Cabinet Member subsequently responded to the Report at the meeting on 9th June 2006, when it was resolved:

To note the Cabinet Member's approval/comments and that implementation of the Task Group's recommendations would be reviewed in 12 months time.

4. This report briefly outlines the progress that has been achieved in each of the areas covered by the 13 recommendations. For clarity, the recommendations are dealt with in turn, in their original order. Further information is appended for Members in their consideration of the issues.
5. In a briefing note to the Chairman prior to the meeting on 7th June this year, the Local Transport and Development Manager advised that the preparation of the LTP Delivery Report was in progress, and that it would be a useful document for Members to have sight of in September, so that they can review the progress made (as reported) in cycling terms, with the added advantage of contrasting achievements in other complementary areas such as walking and public transport. An extract of the Delivery Report is appended (**Appendix A**), and the full document will be available in the **Members' Room**, and online at <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/transport-policy/local-transport-plan/transport-publications.htm>

Main Considerations for the Council

6. The Cycle Lanes Task Group Final Report, made a series of 13 recommendations. In order to present a logical approach to the review process those recommendations are set out below, in italics, with their original numbers. A response, outlining progress since the publication of the report, follows each recommendation.

Recommendation 1:

Recognising the current financial position faced by Wiltshire CC, the Task Group recommends that the Council should pilot free training for the new cycling standard in one designated school. Following this, the exercise should be appraised to establish if the provision of free training should be expanded to other schools in Wiltshire.

Using figures provided by the Road Safety Unit the current cost of training children to the new standard is:

£125	5 students
£1,250	50 students
£12,500	500 students

There has been a great deal of support from local Members for the National Cycling Standard, and opportunities have been taken to enable the County Council to become the first county council in the country to be set up as an Instructor Training Provider (ITP) offering National Standard training. This enables County Council staff to train new instructors to deliver the National Standard. So far the County Council has trained a large number of East Sussex County Council staff and used the monies secured from this to set up the ITP Centre, which is self-funding. The County Council trains its own instructors at a fee of £25 and are able to claim a £300 government bursary, instead of paying £650 plus travel expenses to an outside ITP.

The County Council is also able offer the new Bikeability training scheme, having recently gained accreditation. Bikeability is a new cycling award scheme designed to give the next generation the skills and confidence to ride their bikes on today's roads. To get a Bikeability award, children and adults are instructed on how to ride their bikes to the Government approved National Standard for Cycle Training. The County Council is now one of six national pilot Bikeability schemes currently running and has been awarded a grant of £20,000 which enables Bikeability training to be offered to Wiltshire children free of charge.

The Cycling Proficiency Scheme continues to exist as a voluntary scheme, but incurs hidden costs of between £18,000 to £20,000 per annum which is presently being funded via income generated by the ITP Centre.

Recommendation 2:

The Cabinet Member for Environment Transport and Economic Development and Director of Environmental Services to continue to develop working relationships with Sustrans, consulting with Sustrans on new developments and wherever possible improving the national route infrastructure.

The relationship with Sustrans is being developed at two levels – strategic and operational.

At the strategic level, senior representatives from Sustrans have met with the Cabinet Member and the Assistant Director, Planning and Regeneration, to consider how the authority might engage in the roll-out of Sustrans' current proposals and projects, and how working relationships might be improved through the development of a balanced partnership arrangement that reflects the multi-dimensional interests of such projects.

There was a general consensus on the matters under discussion, and the County Council looks forward to an on-going improvement in relations at this level.

At the operational level, relations continue to be developed with Sustrans and its local rangers. However, the lead cycling officer (Matt Hoskins) left the Council in June 2007 and, as yet, has not been replaced. The new post holder will embrace a responsibility for fostering and maintaining relations with Sustrans.

When applications are received for developments that are close to the National Cycle Network (NCN) opportunities are taken and contributions sought to improve NCN routes or links to the routes if appropriate. Recent examples of this include the Stonehenge Visitors Centre where a contribution was sought (and the arrangement endorsed by the Secretary of State) for a link to NCN route 45 and a development on MoD land in Durrington, where a contribution was sought towards the same NCN route (which is proposed to run past the site).

Recommendation 3:

Wiltshire County Council to allocate designated funding to improve signage of existing cycle routes, most notably the national cycle routes 45, 24 and 4.

Funding has recently been provided for signage in Bradford-on-Avon and the Joint Transportation Team in Salisbury are currently improving pedestrian signing in the middle of Salisbury which will also include signage for NCN routes 24 and 45. It is acknowledged that more progress needs to be made in this area.

Recommendation 4:

Environmental Services Officers to amend the Council's CLARENCE web page to encourage members of the public to report problems on the County owned cycle lanes.

The CLARENCE web page enables members of the public to report faults in the street, for example, problems with the condition of pavements or bus shelters. The web page has been amended to include the fault type "cycle lanes" so that members of the public are more aware that they can easily log a fault or problem in relation to problems relating to cycle routes.

Recommendation 5:

To combat debris build up on cycle lanes that share the road, more regular cleaning is required than present. A review of this by Environmental Services – Transport Planning Officers is recommended, to determine which roads with cycle lanes need the extra service.

The County Council currently carries out very limited amounts of sweeping on the highway network, and this is mainly to deal with identified safety problems on the carriageway. The District Councils carry out more extensive sweeping in connection with street cleansing. The future 'One Council' provides the opportunity to reconsider this operation with a view to providing an improved level of service for cycle lanes and other key areas. In the future the *Transport Asset Management Plan* will be developed which will consider maintenance priorities in the light of available budgets and resources. The need for more regular cleansing on cycle lanes will be considered as part of that exercise.

Recommendation 6:

The County Council to develop a more stringent “signing off” protocol following developer funded cycle lanes. The Task Group recommends that a Wiltshire CC representative visits the site to ensure the cycle lane has been completed to satisfactory standards.

The current procedures that are in place are generally working well. There are some circumstances where adoption of paths takes a significant amount of time and there are sites where cycle routes remain unadopted for 10 years due to outstanding issues with the developer. However, the County Council Inspectors go to great lengths to ensure that developers maintain such facilities to an appropriate standard until such time as they are maintainable at the public expense.

Recommendation 7:

In recognition of how important it is to successful implementation, to ensure the continued inclusion of the local member in consultation undertaken in response to new proposals from embryonic to advanced stages.

Officers ensure that local members are thoroughly consulted via the Project Initiation Document and Brief process. There are also specific stages in the development and implementation of cycle schemes at which local Members are able to provide input. For those cycle schemes which are built by private developers, consultation takes place via the planning application process; local Members are advised of planning applications that have been referred to the highway authority for consultation.

Recommendation 8:

To continue to support the role of the TravelWise Team in promoting cycling and its clear links to the healthier Wiltshire campaign.

TravelWise continues to promote cycling to schools and businesses via the travel plan process and residential travel plans are increasingly playing an important role in the promotion of cycling. The Department for Transport's 2007 publication *Guidance on Transport Assessments* supports policy laid out in *Planning Policy Guidance Note 13: Transport* to encourage travel plans to be submitted alongside planning applications that are likely to have significant transport implications. As a result, a growing number of travel plans are being developed in Wiltshire and these plans include aims and objectives to help improve the availability and choice of sustainable travel modes such as cycling.

TravelWise continues to consult with local people via the Cycle Liaison Panels and an officer has been tasked with reviewing the role of these Panels as well as the Walking Forums. A report outlining the findings of this review will be produced by the end of the year.

Recommendation 9:

The Task Group welcomes the principles that underpin the new Planning Gain Consultation Document, which would increase transparency for officers and allow more strategic planning for cycling.

The Government's position on Planning-gain Supplement (PGS) is not yet clear. So far two formal consultations have been undertaken, both of which have received a degree of critical response. The recently published Green Paper on Housing - *Homes for the Future: more affordable, more sustainable* sets out the current thinking on the subject, and an extract of the Green Paper is appended (**Appendix B**). The eventual arrangements remain to be seen, but the Government has stated that they would not be in place before 2009. It will be consulting further with stakeholders on the four defined options (see para 34 of the Green Paper) some time in the near future.

Regardless of the outcome of PGS proposals, the County Council intends to work towards a position where infrastructure requirements are more clearly set out in relation to identified areas for development, and arrangements for securing infrastructure and/or its funding made more transparent to potential developers. It will not always be possible to define in detail what will be required in infrastructure terms, but off-site cycle provision should be a relatively straightforward requirement to identify and cost at an early stage in the Plan making process. A consultant has recently been commissioned to scope the opportunities that the Council might pursue to take wider advantage of planning gain than is currently the case.

Recommendation 10:

Officers to consider the increased use of contra-flow cycle lanes in urban areas.

The County Council continues to develop the town cycle networks but there are a relatively small number of one-way streets in towns throughout county and in some cases the benefits would be limited, particularly considering some of the more contentious issues (such as loss of parking) that this would raise. Salisbury has a considerable number of one-way roads and several contra-flow lanes have been considered but other routes have been deemed as a higher priority for funding.

The Council's *Cycle Action Plan* is to be reviewed which will involve a review of the cycle network to take account of recent development and land use changes. The increased use of contra-flow will be assessed as part of this. The review period is provisionally programmed to commence in 2008/09 and complete in 2009/10.

Recommendation 11:

Officers in their scheme designs to focus on the area where the segregated cycle lane rejoins the road, to minimise the potential of accidents.

In the past 12-18 months only a small number of shared use paths have been completed but wherever these schemes are implemented safety is always a top priority. An example of a completed scheme is the A342 Nursteed Road, Devizes, where the facilities begin and end at the formal crossing facilities i.e. a Puffin/Pelican and the cyclist is required to dismount rather than be pushed back into the carriageway.

The County Council currently has an approved safety audit policy for all highway schemes. The Policy states that all qualifying schemes (see **Appendix C**) will be subject to the guidelines laid down by the Institution of Highways and Transportation and the requirements of the Highways Agency standard for safety audits HD19/03, subject to some relaxation. These are included in **Appendix C**.

For a typical cycle scheme, a combined Stage 1/2 audit would normally be undertaken, which would take place at the completion of detailed design. At this stage any serious issues of safety would be highlighted by the audit team and recommendations made to the designer to amend the final scheme before issuing.

Following completion of the works, a Stage 3 audit would be undertaken which requires the auditors to visit the site to examine the scheme in typical operational circumstances. Again any issues or concerns are highlighted and recommendations made to undertake remedial measures.

Sites are monitored where safety issues have been raised and this usually involves re-visiting the site and examining the pre- and post-works accident record. If this monitoring identifies any outstanding areas of concern, officers would look again to undertake the necessary changes.

Recommendation 12:

Officers to continue to utilise shared use pavements for cycling, which the Task Group noted is not ideal but is the best option in some places. Absence of buildings opening on to it and low pedestrian use are favourable features, with the pavement from Salisbury to Wilton an example of these two points.

Recent experience has demonstrated that proposals which advocate the conversion of footways to shared use regularly attract strong local opposition. This opposition tends to relate to situations where there are high levels of pedestrian footfall or where footways need to be widened, where there are affected frontages or vehicular accesses and perhaps most importantly, loss of parking occurs. Station Road in Westbury is a typical example of this and the preliminary scheme option was significantly altered in light of strong local opposition. Whilst the preferred option reduces the number of parking spaces that will be removed, it still remains unpopular with some members of the community and this is reflected in comments made by the local Member. Consequently, there will be objections to the TRO process and in circumstances like this it can be difficult for the Cabinet Member to support a scheme. The Browfort to Brewery Corner scheme in Devizes was also quite problematic for similar reasons and as a result officers have now implemented a widened footway, without the benefit of the shared use cycle path, which, some may argue, has compromised the whole scheme.

Conversely, there are also examples of where this type of scheme works well, Nursteed Road in Devizes for example. The schemes which are most successful are usually found in areas with lower levels of pedestrian activity or in new developments, where the widths of the paths are able to be determined. However, as most of the cycle routes are in urban areas this makes schemes more difficult to implement.

Despite local opposition, officers believe that shared use represents a realistic option for implementing the town centre cycle networks which are of course, a LTP priority. Whilst members of the public often claim that cyclists have little regard for pedestrians and that shared use facilities are 'accidents waiting to happen', experience has shown that well-designed shared use facilities can promote a better relationship between users. Off-carriageway facilities are also often more beneficial to the 'novice' or 'recreational' cyclist and families, thus encouraging more people to cycle.

Recommendation 13:

Wiltshire County Council to ensure the future use of non-ridged lining to separate shared use paths between cyclists and pedestrians.

As a rule, segregated facilities are not provided in Wiltshire and instead un-segregated shared use facilities are tended to be provided. However, there is a requirement for white lines to provide segregation subject to a national standard. In this case, it is laid down in accordance with Schedule 6 of the *Traffic Sign Regulations and General Directions 2002* in particular, diagram 1049.1 (shown in **Appendix D**). Officers would choose to use the lower threshold of 12 mm height for the division.

Environmental Impact

7. There are no environmental impacts associated with this report, which is restricted to reviewing progress.

Risk Assessment

8. The achievement of the aspirations of the Task Group, reflected in some of their recommendations, will be subject to the same constraints applied to many other of the Council's services; they can be achieved only within the priorities that the Executive gives them within the corporate framework of priorities and budget provision. There is a greater risk that the recommendations that rely on direct public funding will be not be achieved compared with those that rely on delivery through the planning processes.

Financial Implications

9. There are no financial implications arising from this report, which is restricted to reviewing progress.

Options Considered

10. Where options of choice in the provision of new or upgraded cycle facilities exist, officers will have regard to the recommendations contained in the Report, and seek to implement options that align with these recommendations where possible.

Conclusion

11. Progress towards the implementation of the recommendations of the Task Group has been made, but not universally. Where progress has not been achieved explanation is offered. Officers will continue to work with partners, developers and stakeholders to improve provision for cyclists, but within the boundaries of the corporate and service objectives of the authority and available finances. The consultation processes that reflect the local communities' aspirations and concerns will continue to inform the direction of design and implementation, as well as informing, at a political level, decision making in relation to individual proposals.

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The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:

None.