



ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE: 4 MARCH 2021

LEICESTERSHIRE CYCLING AND WALKING STRATEGY

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT

Purpose of Report

1. A presentation (Appendix A) will be given to the Committee by the Director, to provide an overview of the work that the County Council is presently undertaking to develop a Cycling and Walking Strategy (CaWS); other associated work; cost and resource implications; and to prompt the Committee's input to its development.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Transport Priorities 2020-2050 sets out the strategic priorities which support the principle of a sustainable travel hierarchy which prioritises and promotes cycling and walking in preference to single occupancy car use for movement of people.
3. The Council's third Local Transport Plan (LTP3) 2011-2026 identifies six overall priorities, three of which are relevant when considering cycling and walking:
 - Encouraging active and sustainable travel;
 - Improving connectivity and accessibility;
 - Managing the impact of our transport system on quality of life.
4. The Council's Strategic Plan outlines the Council's five key outcomes for 2018 to 2022. The CaWS supports all of the Strategic Plan outcomes:
 - Strong Economy: By helping to promote sustainable access to jobs and training for those without access to a private car
 - Wellbeing and Opportunity: By helping people to improve their health through physical activity, in particular helping to tackle the obesity crisis
 - Keeping People Safe: Through promotion of road safety initiatives and delivery of safe infrastructure (protection of vulnerable road users)
 - Great communities: Promotion of healthier communities and the delivery of better places
 - Affordable and Quality Homes: Providing quality infrastructure that promotes and supports the use of sustainable travel, giving residents of new homes access to jobs, services and leisure opportunities
5. On 15 May 2019, the County Council declared a Climate Emergency, with a commitment to achieve carbon net zero by 2030 for our own emissions and 2050 for the wider Leicestershire emissions. LCC, joining the UK100 coalition of the most ambitious local leaders in the UK, has pledged to now reach a revised target of achieving 'net zero' across the county by 2045 – five years sooner than the

government target of 2050. The updated 2020 Environment Strategy sets out how the Council will reduce the environmental impacts of travel and transport.

Providing a suitable level and quality of cycling and walking infrastructure coupled with essential education, promotion and engagement using the successful *Choose How You Move* brand, to increase use of sustainable transport, is a key element in delivering on our Climate Change commitment and the Environment Strategy.

6. The 2019 Annual Report of the Director of Public Health highlighted the need to increase efforts toward people in Leicestershire leading more active lives, helping in tackling obesity, improving air quality and improving physical and mental wellbeing.

Background

7. On 23rd March, the UK entered its first lockdown as part of the measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19. Overnight, demand for road and rail travel fell dramatically across the country, whilst walking and cycling increased, up to 300% from before Covid-19.
8. In July 2020 government launched a new plan for England: 'Gear Change', which set out government's radical ambitions for cycling and walking. This plan aims to build on the significant increase in the number of people cycling during the pandemic. It sets out a comprehensive, long term vision to increase active travel and embed the benefits of walking and cycling into how we live, work and get around. Taking up walking and cycling has been proven to offer huge benefits for people's physical and mental health and Government are now funding this agenda.
9. Getting more people to cycle and walk is vital in helping the Authority to deliver on its declaration of a Climate Emergency and to help address the obesity crisis (the percentage of physically active adults in Leicestershire (pre-Covid) was significantly worse than the national average).
10. In a letter from government Minister Chris Heaton-Harris (28 July 2020) to the Leader, accompanying the Plan's publication, the minister expressly states that;
 - *'Cycling must be placed at the heart of the transport network, with capital spending, road space and traffic planners' attention befitting that role.'*
 - *'It is of the utmost importance that local authorities follow this guidance closely in designing any cycle infrastructure scheme in future'*
 - *'....schemes which do not follow this guidance will not be funded.'*
11. The new DfT Plan itself states that;
 - *'... there will be a presumption that all new [local highway] schemes will deliver or improve cycling infrastructure to the new standards laid down...'*
 - *[the Government] '... will create a long-term cycling and walking programme and budget, like the roads programme and budget; Delivering good schemes needs a pipeline of assured funding. We will end the stop-go nature of previous cycling and walking funding, allowing local authorities and others to plan in a long-term way.'*

12. These developments mark a significant change in government commitment to cycling and walking policy and funding; and sets out the expectation that space for cycling and walking is prioritised and is designed into all local highway schemes.
13. The Council's response to the government's Decarbonisation Transport consultation (August 2020) advised that *'It is vital to create a culture of road use that supports, rather than deters, cycling'*. Of the six strategic priorities that were highlighted to government, the first strategic priority was *'Accelerating Modal Shift to Public and Active Transport'*. This set out the Authority's position and the 'asks' to enable local authorities to achieve the wider goal of decarbonisation through active travel.
14. The 2019 Annual Report of the Director of Public Health highlighted the need to increase efforts toward people in Leicestershire leading more active lives, helping in tackling obesity, improving air quality and improving physical and mental wellbeing. The report evidences and advised that;
 - *'Physical inactivity directly contributes to one in six deaths in the UK, the same number as smoking. Around a quarter of us are still classified as inactive, failing to achieve a minimum of 30 minutes of activity a week.'*
 - *'The percentage of physically active adults in Leicestershire is SIGNIFICANTLY WORSE than the national average'*.
15. Increasing cycling and walking is stipulated as a key action that the Authority is using to combat the impact of these statistics in Leicestershire by improving public health.
16. The report further goes on to set out some of the Public Health aims in moving people in Leicestershire toward a more active lifestyle through more use of active travel, saying;
 - *'Each week, adults should accumulate at least 150 minutes (2 1/2 hours) of moderate intensity activity (such as brisk walking or cycling); or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity (such as running) ...'* as stipulated by the Chief Medical Officer.
 - *'In future, we want to work more closely with local planning authorities to increase provision of active travel and high-quality walking infrastructure in new developments. Newly built areas should ideally prioritise cycling and walking as the preferred means of transport'*.
17. Facilitating and encouraging cycling and walking therefore plays a key part of helping to achieve the Authority's strategic objectives and delivering on wider carbon and health agendas. The provision of cycling and walking infrastructure on a large scale requires external funding, be it through government bids or land developers. Having an evidenced CaWS will place the Authority in a good position to work with local planning authorities, to ensure they can obligate the right infrastructure and is delivered in the right places.
18. In Summer 2020 the DfT established *Active Travel England*. This is a new funding body and Inspectorate responsible for ensuring delivery of high-quality cycling and walking routes as an integral part of the transport network. It also offers expertise in scheme design, implementation, and stakeholder management. In essence, it appears that it will be responsible for 'policing' delivery of the new Plan, on the

basis of which it will be determining (or at the least advising DfT on) future funding to local highway authorities for schemes (including cycling and walking infrastructure and potentially highway schemes in general).

19. The government pledged a national allocation of £2 billion to support cycling and walking over 5 years (2020/21-2024/25), of which an initial £250m fund was released in 2020/21 for measures to support walking and cycling travel post Covid-19 lockdown. Whilst the overall sum may seem considerable, to put it into perspective Highway England's Road Investment Strategy 2 budget for the same period is over £27bn.
20. The initial £250m was made available to local transport authorities through the Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF) bidding process:
 - Tranche 1 (T1) – installation of temporary projects for the Covid-19 pandemic: The Authority successfully secured £335k tranche 1 funding, to deliver schemes in three areas; A6 Birstall, A47 Leicester Forest East and Kettering road Market Harborough.
 - Tranche 2 (T2) – creation of longer-term projects: In August 2020 the Authority submitted a bid to deliver two highway schemes along the A6 corridor (Birstall and the South of Loughborough), and complementary measures including a countywide package of dropped kerbs along key corridors; cycle parking at key hubs and Behavioural Change measures. The Authority were offered an award of £900k based on strength of our bid, which represented less than half the amount bid for. The Authority took the difficult decision to decline the offer, due to the financial risk it would place on its budgets to 'top up' the funding to be able to deliver the schemes in line with their objectives. Instead the authority intends to use the matching to work toward building a better evidence-based strategy, to be able to build more strongly evidenced future bids, and also for delivery of smaller schemes and behavioural change programmes.
21. Whilst the bidding process for T1 was relatively light touch (reflecting the need for a rapid response to the Covid-19 situation), the T2 process relied more heavily on identifying radical, evidence-based projects. It is anticipated that the process for bidding for the remainder of the £2bn will continue with a far stronger emphasis on funding eligibility being linked to projects that comply with the Government's Plan.
22. In respect of developer funding, the government's planning White Paper, which sets out its vision for the planning system, has a potentially significant impact on new development and the way infrastructure is funded. New developments are likely to require significant changes toward prioritising highway space to cycling and walking over car use, creating a hierarchy of users that puts cyclists and pedestrians first. This will impact on the existing highway infrastructure in surrounding urban centres and along key corridor where shorter sustainable journeys are made, as changes will need to be made to mitigate and update routes.
23. If the Authority does not have an adopted CaWS, along with supporting Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans for our county towns and key corridors, particularly in high growth areas, there is a risk that developers could not be obligated to deliver or fund the right kind of infrastructure in the right places on the

existing network. It is vital that a Strategy, along with cohesive cycling and walking infrastructure plans are developed for all appropriate areas, in order to identify investment that has status in the planning arena. This would ensure that development was funded or delivered in a strategic way, maximising the opportunities for development that benefits communities by providing cohesive cycling and walking networks.

24. To ensure that the Authority is in a strong position to deliver on wider health and environment objectives, an adopted Strategy is required, which is evidence based, supported by infrastructure plans and comprehensive behavioural change and engagement programmes.
25. This will maximise opportunities for bids for government funding (e.g. a share of the remainder £2bn Government capital and revenue funding over the next four years) and developer contributions toward cycling and walking infrastructure to support and mitigate impacts of growth and provide healthy streets and communities.

Finance

26. The development of the Cycling and Walking Strategy is estimated to cost £100k-£150k and has been identified and allocated in the Highways and Transport Capital Programme and Works Programme approved by Cabinet in March 2020; it is also included in the Programme for 2021/22, which is subject to a separate report to this meeting of the Committee.
27. The next stages of the CaWS countywide programme, involve;
- Data gathering – to better understand how people travel by foot and cycle
 - Development and adopting of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPS) - for the seven county towns, urban area surrounding Leicester city, and the key sustainable transport corridors
 - Delivering a wider programme of Behavioural Change and Engagement
28. These stages are currently estimated to cost in the region of £4m ‘one off’ costs split over several years, and in the region of £600k to £1.2m annually thereafter. Not all funding has been identified in current MTFS past 21/22 in future years for delivery of these next stages. External funding would be required to deliver these stages (including developer contributions, and having a CaWS in place should help to strengthen the authority’s position in this respect). Levels of future funding will dictate the pace of rollout for the wider strategy. The CaWS places the authority in the best position to attract external funding to delivery on its objectives.
29. A summary of estimated costs to draw up the strategy and supporting plans & programmes is provided in the table below.

Item	Cost	Notes	Budget Identified
CaWS Development	£100k-£150k	Including consultation/engagement	Yes 2020/21
Data Gathering	£1.7-£2.3m	‘One-off’ cost	Partial – pending MTFS approval
Data analysis	£100k-£200k	Per annum	Partial – pending MTFS approval

LCWIP development	£1.1m - £1.5m	Rolling Programme of LCWIP development	Partial – pending MTFS approval
Behavioural change	£500k-£1m (revenue)	Per annum	Partial – pending MTFS approval

30. In regard to the development of LCWIP's, further discussion needs to take place with partners (e.g. district/borough council's) in regard to cost sharing and to draw up plans through existing working partnerships in supporting and evidencing Local Plans. Funding to actually deliver the infrastructure set out in LCWIP's will need to come from Government, land developers and other funding sources over a long period of time. This is why it is important to put in place a Cycling and Walking Strategy to provide a clear framework to underpin future investment decisions.
31. There will be an impact on existing staff resource in drawing up the LCWIP's, scheme designing, undertaking data analysis and delivering behavioural change and engagement programmes. It is expected that relevant teams will require a measure of increased staff resource to implement the approach required to meet the cycling and walking objectives. This is factored into the above estimated costs.
32. The Environment and Transport department is working with Finance through the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) budget setting process, to identify an approach and budget profile to fund these items, given the competing demands on the authority's budgets.

Risks and Opportunities

33. Risks and opportunities will need to be considered going forward. Government guidance stipulates that cycling and walking measures are to be included in all future highway schemes, where appropriate. This is likely to increase the burden on maintenance budgets. The Council will need to consider what maintenance priority is given to new cycling and walking surfaces in terms of surface renewals, and also the approach given to these surfaces in winter, i.e. gritting (if these assets are to be kept to a standard suitable for increased number of users and ensure they are of a standard that encourages their use). The authority can explore whether it might be possible to seek greater levels of commuted sums for infrastructure provided by developers and other third parties in future, in order to mitigate the impact on maintenance budgets. The authority will continue to press for greater maintenance settlements from Government to support their cycling and walking agenda.
34. In regard to decisions around the profiling of funding toward these recommendations and how quickly they can be implemented; there is essentially a sliding scale of risk. Early investment places the Authority in a stronger position to bid for government funds and obligate developers to fund or deliver schemes sooner. Conversely, funding these recommendations more slowly will result in an inability to reliably secure external funding from these sources in the next few years, to a point that the Authority will not be in a position to deliver a cycling and walking strategy of any meaningful measure.
35. Likewise, a light touch approach to implementing this Strategy will impact on the ability to maximise support for strategic outcomes e.g. environment, carbon/air quality, and public health and will be open to increasing public scrutiny and challenge.

36. To date the authority has focused efforts on supporting the growth agenda in support of Government policy and funding (bidding) criteria/objectives. This has meant, in reality, investment in cycling and walking infrastructure has had to take lesser priority than road-building schemes aimed at reducing congestion and improving motor vehicle journey times (albeit those schemes normally do include pedestrian and cycle enhancements). This combined with limited dedicated Government funding for cycling and walking schemes has historically and inevitably resulted in a slower, less holistic, approach to delivering cohesive cycling and walking networks
37. Whilst Government policy and funding has now shifted to be far more strongly inclusive of the cycling and walking agenda in all areas, the money available to the authority, be it from Government or within its own budgets, to fund significant cycling and walking infrastructure improvements is currently virtually nothing in comparison to the scale of the challenge faced. Projects to deliver on the Government's ambitions are likely to be costly; for example, taking out a vehicle running lane to create a segregated cycle super-highway requires the moving of kerb lines, in turn requiring drainage gullies to be moved and the surface of the carriageway to be reprofiled. Thus, the early years of CaWS and LCWIP delivery are likely to be 'slow burn' aligned with whatever monies are available, with any marked change in the pace of delivery only coming about should the funding position be improved significantly,
38. Notwithstanding the above, pursuing and implementing a CaWS will enable the Authority to align to current government policy, guidance, funding criteria and recognise the impacts of Covid-19. It will also put the Authority in the best place to secure government funding for any future highway projects; secure developer mitigation measures; achieve on its climate and wider environmental commitments; and play its role in tackling the public health crisis.

Engagement

39. High level engagement exercises with key stakeholders, Members and the public have begun to obtain valuable early insight to help shape the CaWS. This includes an online survey running from 27th Jan 2021 to 10th March 2021 (www.leicestershire.gov.uk/cycling-and-walking-engagement-survey) which is being advertised widely, through media channels and stakeholder networks. Further detailed engagement with stakeholders, Members and the public at a scheme level will be a key part of developing the future LCWIP's.
40. As part of this current engagement on the Cycling and Walking Strategy (CaWS) the Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee is now being asked for its views.
41. It is intended that a further report, detailing the outcome of the engagement and presenting a final version of the CaWS, will be presented to the Scrutiny Committee in Summer 2020, ahead of its presentation to Cabinet for approval thereafter.

Resource Implications

42. Developing a CaWS is the start of a process to help deliver the Council's cycling and walking ambitions. Robust evidence is needed to understand current and future levels of cycling and walking, including the purchase of new camera-based technology; a pipeline of projects following government's specified process for developing Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP's) and a behavioural change programme (revenue funded) would be required. The current programmes of works are not sufficiently extensive in scope to deliver both the Council's and government's objectives.
43. The development of the Cycling and Walking Strategy is estimated to cost £100k-£150k and has been identified and allocated in the Highways and Transport Capital Programme and Works Programme approved by Cabinet in March 2020
44. It is currently estimated that the next stages of the CaWS countywide programme LCWIP's and data gathering would cost in the region of £4m 'one off' costs split over several years, and between £600k to £1.2m annually. Not all funding has been identified in current MTFs past 21/22 in future years for delivery of these next stages, and future funding will dictate the pace of rollout for the wider strategy. In regard to the development of LCWIP's, further discussions need to take place with partners (e.g. district councils) in regard to cost sharing and to draw up plans through existing working partnerships in supporting and evidencing Local Plans. External funding would be required to proceed. The CaWS places the authority in the best position to attract external funding to delivery on its objectives.
45. The Director of Corporate Resources has been consulted on the content of this report.

Timetable for Decisions

46. Early engagement with stakeholders, Members, and the public to help shape the CaWS is taking place between 27 January and 14 March 2021, with further engagement in April/May 2021.
47. A further report on the outcome of the engagement, presenting the final draft CaWS, will be considered by the Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee in Summer 2021 ahead of presenting it to Cabinet for approval thereafter.

Background Papers

Local:

Cabinet – 18 September 2020 – MTFs latest position:

- <http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=5997&Ver=4>

Cabinet – 24 March 2020 – E&T 2021 Highways Capital Programme:

- <http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=5993&Ver=4>

LCC Annual Report of the Director of Public Health (2019):

- www.lsr-online.org/uploads/director-of-public-health-annual-report-2019.pdf

LCC Environmental Strategy:

- <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/conservation-and-sustainability/environmental-policies-and-reports>

Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Transport Priorities:

- www.leicestershire.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/road-maintenance/transport-policy-plans-and-studies

National:

The Government Cycling and Walking Plan for England (2020):

- www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycling-and-walking-plan-for-england

Government press release launching the £2bn cycling and walking plan;

- www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-kickstarts-2bn-cycling-and-walking-revolution

Government LCWIP technical guidance to Local Authorities (2017):

- www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-cycling-and-walking-infrastructure-plans-technical-guidance-and-tools

Latest Local Transport Note on Cycle infrastructure design guidance (2020):

- www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-120

The Government Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (2017):

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycling-and-walking-investment-strategy>

Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS) safety review (Nov 2018) and government response;

- www.gov.uk/government/consultations/cycling-and-walking-investment-strategy-cwis-safety-review
- www.gov.uk/government/speeches/governments-response-to-the-cycling-walking-investment-strategy-safety-review

Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy: Report to Parliament (Feb 2020);

- www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycling-and-walking-investment-strategy-cwis-report-to-parliament

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

None

Equality and Human Rights Implications

48. An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) screening exercise is being undertaken and will be informed by the outcome of the engagement exercise. If appropriate, a full EHRIA will be presented to the Cabinet in Summer 2021, alongside the consultation outcomes, to assist the Cabinet with its decision on the exercise of its Public-Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010.

49. The CaWS is a high level, strategic document. Where appropriate, an EHRIA will be completed as specific schemes are developed.

Environmental Impact

50. The CaWS outlines the high-level environmental challenges that are faced in developing a cycling and walking strategy. These challenges will be considered as part of the review and development of an updated Local Transport Plan. This will be informed by the Council's Strategic Plan and Single Outcome Framework to incorporate the new environment and climate change commitments and the Council's Environment Strategy.

51. Where relevant an appropriate Environmental Impact Assessment will be completed as specific schemes are developed.

Appendices

Appendix A - PowerPoint presentation on the Cycling and Walking Strategy.

Officers to Contact

Ann Carruthers
Director, Environment and Transport
Telephone: (0116) 305 7000
Email: Ann.Carruthers@leics.gov.uk

Ian Vears
Assistant Director, Environment and Transport
Telephone: (0116) 305 7966
Email: Ian.Vears@leics.gov.uk