



HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

8 JUNE 2023

QUESTIONS ASKED BY AN ELECTED MEMBER UNDER STANDING ORDER 7

Questions asked by Mr. M. Hunt CC:

1. I was sad, but not entirely surprised, to see that Leicestershire achieved a score of zero in the recent DfT local authority active travel capability ratings. We were matched on zero by Rutland, whilst the City of Leicester top scored. A zero score indicates (“Local leadership for active travel is not obvious, no significant plans are in place, the authority has delivered only lower complexity schemes”). Why have we done so badly and what are we doing about it?
2. What will this mean for future bidding to Government for active travel in the County? (I would be grateful if the link can be embedded in the text or placed as a footnote:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1141355/local-authority-active-travel-capability-ratings.pdf
3. When nearly 150,000 Leicestershire residents live in the Leicester Urban Area (ONS), why can't we achieve the same active travel capability across area; why does it stop at the city boundary?
4. When small towns hosting universities in Britain are well known to excel in cycle provision, why is Loughborough, a town which could create the critical mass for cycling and walking, the odd one out?
5. The school run is one of the major contributors to congestion at the morning peak hour, why are we no longer prioritising School Travel Plans and helping schools to make them more effective so we can publishing real achievements.
6. A National Cycle Route (NCR6) crosses the M1 and the West of Loughborough SUE and has proved a safe route for cyclists and walkers between Shepshed and Loughborough, as the SUE develops will the County be adopting the path and will we be insisting on a durable surface of sufficient width? What other paths will the County be adopting within this extensive development?”

Reply by the Chairman

1. Assessment scores were made by the Active Travel England (ATE), based largely on a self-assessment form completed by each Local Transport Authority. In the case of Leicestershire's score, ATE recognised the level of commitment to walking and cycling being demonstrated by the Authority in terms of the adoption of a Cycling and Walking Strategy and the use of its own monies to develop a programme of countywide Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs). The primary reason that the Authority received a zero score, is because it had not yet developed and delivered a 'transformative' cycling and walking project, something reflecting the Government's vision for cycling and walking as set out in 'Gear Change' and in national cycle infrastructure design guidance LTN1/20.

A key reason for this is the availability of funding. With a capital programme already heavily committed to supporting other key Government policies – including provision of infrastructure vital to the delivery of more new homes and to the creation of new jobs – and without access to significant funding streams that have been/are available to urban and metropolitan areas (such as the Transforming Cities Fund and The City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements), the Authority has not to date been in the position to secure the millions of pounds necessary to deliver 'transformative' projects.

However, the Authority is working pro-actively with ATE to improve its capability rating to at least one by this summer. A number of actions are being undertaken, including the provision of officer training including to enhance knowledge and skills in the design of LTN1/20 schemes, Member training (the planned All Member Briefing session on 6th June) and the setting up of an Active Travel Forum. Together with the ongoing development of the LCWIP programme, officers are confident that going forward this will place the Authority in a far stronger position to benefit from future Government funding opportunities and to secure developer contributions towards the delivery of projects that will 'transform' provision for pedestrians and cyclists.

2. Were the Authority not to be working proactively with ATE to improve its score to at least one by this summer, then in the future it would be ineligible to bid to ATE (Government) for funding to support the delivery of both revenue and capital funded active travel projects.

Achieving a score of at least one will mean that the Authority will be eligible to bid, albeit there would be no guarantee of success (which is an inherent risk with any 'bid driven' system of awarding funding). The zero score has not altered the Authority's commitment to continue with active travel work, including to develop a programme of LCWIPs and to undertake promotional and educational work under the umbrella of Choose How You Move.

3. As per the response to question 1, as an urban area Leicester City Council has received over £32m of Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) monies that it has used to help to pay towards the improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure within its boundaries. The Government's stated focus for the

TCF is ..."[to drive up] productivity through investments in public and sustainable transport infrastructure in some of England's largest city regions." Non-city areas have not had access to a similarly targeted fund.

However, the County Council has been working hard to ensure that it is best placed to seek to benefit from future funding opportunities to improve cycling and walking infrastructure in areas adjoining Leicester City. An LCWIP for the South of Leicester is well advanced and close to completion, and it is currently intended to bring that to the Cabinet for approval towards the end of this calendar year. An LCWIP for the North of Leicester is also in development and it is presently intended to bring that to the Cabinet for approval in early 2024. Officers have been in consultations with Leicester City Council colleagues to seek to ensure that both LCWIPs align with their current and any future proposals for cycling and walking improvements within the City.

The LCWIP documents will set out the Authority's ambitions for significantly improving cycling and walking networks in areas surrounding the City of Leicester and will provide a basis for seeking to secure funding for projects, both from the Government and developers.

4. Measures to improve walking and cycling provision in Loughborough have previously been undertaken and paid for by the Local Sustainable Transport Fund and as part of the Town Centre Major Project. Building on this and in recognition of the key role that the town plays in providing for new homes, jobs and in hosting a world-class university, the development of an LCWIP covering Loughborough, including Shepshed, has been prioritised. As with all current LCWIP's in development, extensive engagement has been undertaken to inform the development of the Loughborough Area LCWIP, and it included: Members, District Council, advocacy groups and the public. It is now at an advanced stage of development and close to completion, and it is currently intended to bring it to the Cabinet for approval towards the end of this calendar year (alongside the LCWIP for South of Leicester referenced in response to question 3).

The LCWIP will set out ambitions for further improving cycling and walking networks in Loughborough and Shepshed and will provide a basis for seeking to secure funding for projects, both from the Government and developers.

5. Working with schools continues to be a priority for Leicestershire County Council. The Safe and Sustainable Travel Team works closely with schools across the county, under the Choose How You Move brand to enable and encourage active and sustainable travel journeys.

The Choose How You Move Team works in partnership with Active Together and district councils to deliver a programme of initiatives. The MODESHIFT STARS travel planning tool is available free of charge for all primary schools within England and Leicestershire County Council continues to promote this as part of the Choose How You Move programme. This requires commitment

from the school to resource, manage and record data including initiatives and survey results into the system. Although not all schools currently use MODESHIFT STARS to record active and sustainable travel activity, we have worked with several schools across the county to encourage active and sustainable travel. Please see below some examples of projects delivered within the last 12 months:

- Launch of 16 park and stride sites
- School Street Trials at three schools
- Provision of Bikeability
- Performance in education – Air Quality and Active Travel
- October - Active Travel Month
- Junior Road Safety Officer Scheme
- 13 schools awarded active and sustainable travel grants

As part of our 2023-2024 schools programme the Choose How You Move Schools Officer will be working with the Active Together Sports and Physical Activity Network to identify seven schools (one from each district) to provide additional resources to support the development of a minimum bronze accredited MODESHIFT STARS travel plan.

6. The cycle route is already part of the existing Public Right of Way (PROW) Network, Footpath K68 and Bridleway L17. We're not aware of any plan the developer has to upgrade the condition of this route to offer for full highway adoption.

There are a number of other links proposed in planning (plan included) and we expect that the developer's intention is for those that aren't existing PROWs to remain privately maintained, however, it is up to the developer as to whether they want to offer them for adoption.