

Agenda Item No. 7(h)

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET MEETING

23 December 2014

Report of the Strategic Director – Economy, Transport and Environment

**CYCLING STRATEGY FOR DERBYSHIRE (HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT
AND INFRASTRUCTURE)**

(1) **Purpose of Report** To seek Cabinet approval to the formulation, with partners, of a Cycling Strategy for Derbyshire, and to authorise a financial contribution to the procurement of specialist advice to support this.

(2) **Information and Analysis** Cycling is of relevance to a significant number of existing County Council priorities as set out in the Council Plan:

- A Derbyshire that works
 - Ensure that Council services such as green infrastructure (sustainable travel), support the Council's economic regeneration priorities.
- Well-connected communities
 - Promote the use of sustainable modes of travel including the County's Public Rights of Way and greenways to promote healthy living.
 - Maintain and improve facilities for pedestrians and cyclists to enable and promote a safer, healthy and sustainable travel option.
 - Support the development of a cycling culture in the County, using the traffic free trails and promotion of Cycle Derbyshire.
 - Continue to work in partnership to further reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on Derbyshire's roads.
- A healthy Derbyshire
 - Work with partners and local communities to promote healthy lifestyles and encourage more people, particularly children and older people, and people with learning disabilities, to participate in sports and recreational activities.
- A safer Derbyshire
 - Promote events such as the Summer of Cycling and ensure a lasting legacy in the County.

This wide coverage of priorities illustrates the importance and the potential of cycling, but also means that inevitably, there are relevant areas of work taking place within different County Council service departments and also within partner organisations, particularly Derbyshire Sport. This creates a challenge for the coordination of activity whilst at the same time offering the advantage of being able to draw upon a wide range of skills and resources. An officer working group is already in place to coordinate activity around cycling, and a liaison group including numerous Derbyshire cycling organisations meets regularly but neither of these is designed to determine priorities.

Cycling has, over the course of 2014, had a raised public profile both within Derbyshire and nationally, with events such as the Tour de France and l'Eroica Britannia being hugely successful and receiving extensive media coverage. It has also been receiving investment through infrastructure developments including the Strategic Cycle Network in Chesterfield, the Pedal Peak II project and continued expansion of the County's Greenway network. The County's Rights of Way network already offers almost 600 kilometres of cycle routes. Accurate measurement of the amount of cycling taking place is extremely difficult, but there is little doubt that it is currently increasing amongst both commuters and leisure cyclists. There is certainly, recorded through staff travel surveys, growth in commuter cycling amongst the County Council's own workforce. It is probably realistic to expect that, if the Council took no relevant action, the amount of cycling across the County would continue to increase over the next few years. The Council and others, though, will be carrying out activity intended to accelerate this. The growth of cycling presents clear opportunities for the visitor economy, public health, the potential to reduce traffic congestion and to improve air quality, but it also presents threats (road safety risks and the costs of maintaining additional infrastructure) which need to be properly understood and mitigated.

The Government, in recognition of the strong benefits of cycling, is expected to finalise and publish a national Cycling Delivery Plan shortly, probably in March 2015. A draft has already been produced and suggests a national target to double the number of cycle trips by 2025. In support of this, it is proposed to invite expressions of interest from local authorities interested in setting up some form of cycling agreement with the Government. Those participating will be expected to identify a local 'champion' for cycling, commit to ensuring that new infrastructure is designed to properly take cycling into account and to have a clear local strategy in place. In return, they can expect to receive Government support, although at this stage it is not clear in exactly what form or how resources will be allocated.

There are numerous initiatives and aspirations being developed elsewhere, which gives a great opportunity to achieve more, working closely with partners. These include:

- The development of a Wider Peak District Cycling Strategy coordinated by the Peak District National Park Authority but with the involvement of the County Council and other partners.
- An aspiration to develop a Derwent Valley Cycle Route, led by a user group but likely to be supported through infrastructure projects within Derby City.
- A need identified by Derbyshire Sport to develop a shared vision and plan for cycling across all disciplines, from beginner to elite levels, including cycling for recreation, sport and utility. Strategic commitment across health, transport, leisure and other key partners is developing, with key discussions taking place over the next few months.
- Completion of existing projects better linking heritage assets, workplaces and communities in the north east of the County, such as the Archaeological Way and interest in progressing the development of the Clowne Branch Line as a multi-user trail/greenway.
- Continued development of the Pennine Bridleway.
- The prominence of accessibility and the health and wellbeing of visitors in the National Forest Strategy.

For the benefit of the organisations involved in these, as well as for the County Council itself, it would be helpful if there was greater clarity over the Council's priorities and level of support for these and other potential areas of work.

In combination, the issues noted above present a strong case for the development and approval of a Cycling Strategy for Derbyshire. It is recommended that this should be kept at the level of a simple statement of intent reflecting the Council Plan and supporting documents but, taking into account the likely requirements of the Cycling Delivery Plan, providing clarity about where, when and how the Council expects to intervene. Another key consideration, though, will be agreement over the 'ownership' and approval of the Strategy. One option, given in particular the relevance of cycling to the visitor economy, is that this is developed for and approved by the Derby and Derbyshire Joint Committee for Economic Prosperity (D2) or, in due course, the Combined Authority. This would require the County Council's existing policies to be brought together with those of the other nine partner organisations plus Derbyshire Sport, the Peak District National Park Authority and potentially others, and there may be difficult negotiations required in order to agree priorities. However, the direct involvement of district and borough councils would certainly have benefits through alignment with land-use and regeneration plans, and the involvement of Derby City Council would have added benefits for the coordinated delivery of infrastructure. It is therefore recommended that Cabinet gives its approval in principle to the creation of a D2 Cycling Strategy, which could then be recommended to the Joint Committee for consideration.

Cabinet is asked to note that Government's draft Cycling Delivery Plan also makes some reference to walking, particularly focused upon travel to school. It has not been Government's intention to produce a separate, parallel, delivery plan for this, however, numerous consultees have suggested that this should be the case and it remains to be seen whether or how walking is reflected in the final version of the Delivery Plan. Irrespective of how walking is dealt with nationally, for Derbyshire similar arguments can be made for the production of a Walking Strategy to those for a Cycling Strategy. It is proposed that, at this stage, work be concentrated on the production of a Cycling Strategy from which lessons learned can be applied in due course to walking and an approach recommended to Cabinet.

The assessments carried out for Derbyshire's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) 2007-2012, highlighted the fragmented nature of the network available for cycling and horse riding across the county, with generally little opportunity for circular routes without users being forced onto the roads. There are several actions in the latest RoWIP Statement of Action for 2013 - 2017 to improve the provision of routes for all bridleway users. It is intended that the Cycling Strategy will have regard to the needs of horse riders alongside those for cyclists and walkers. As far as possible, any new or improved cycling routes or infrastructure will also accommodate use by horse riders.

Current areas of work around the monitoring of the Pedal Peak II project and the production of business cases for Growth Deal funding have highlighted that despite (or to some extent because of) the broad range of environmental, transport and health impacts associated with cycling it is difficult to produce business cases for investment which can compete with other areas such as, for example, roads. Whilst there has been some support for cycling brought forward through initial Growth Deals, it would still be beneficial, not least for the purposes of the County Council's own investment decisions, to build a better understanding of the economic benefits of cycling. Informal discussion with the Peak District National Park Authority has led to a proposal to commission work to examine in detail the economic benefits of the Pedal Peak II project and, more importantly, to determine how transferable these would be to other projects. It is proposed, before commissioning work, to seek advice from other authorities, cycling organisations such as Sustrans and from universities. However, it is recommended that Cabinet gives its approval to the County Council making a contribution of up to 50% of the cost of specialist advice and with a ceiling of £10,000. This would be procured through a competitive process, in accordance with Financial Regulations, by either the Council or the Peak District National Park Authority. Although £10,000, in the current climate, constitutes a significant investment, it should lead to future resources being used more efficiently through being focussed upon projects with a good chance of receiving funding.

(3) **Financial Considerations** A contribution of up to £10,000 to the proposed procurement of specialist advice on the business case for cycling investment can be met from existing Transportation Strategy Revenue budget.

(4) **Legal Considerations** The terms of the contract for the specialist advice will be agreed by the Director of Legal Services.

(5) **Environmental and Health, Equality and Diversity, and Transport Considerations** Cycling, as detailed in the body of the report, has potential benefits across a wide range of Council objectives relating to healthy travel, accessibility and environmental sustainability.

Other Considerations

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors have been considered: prevention of crime and disorder, human resources and property considerations.

(6) **Call-In** Is it required that call-in be waived in respect of the decisions proposed in the report? No.

(7) **Key Decision** No.

(8) **Background Papers** Information on the Local Transport Plan 2011-2016, Greenways Strategies and the Chesterfield Strategic Cycle Network can be found on the County Council's website. Officer contact details - Jim Seymour, extension 38557.

(9) **OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATIONS** That Cabinet:

- 9.1 Approves, in principle, the development of a Cycling Strategy to be approved by the Derby and Derbyshire Joint Committee for Economic Prosperity (D2).
- 9.2 Notes the potential for a parallel exercise dealing with walking to be developed in the future.
- 9.3 Approves the procurement of specialist advice on the economic business case for cycling investment and a County Council contribution of up to £10,000 towards the cost of such advice.

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