

ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

13 MAY 2022

UPDATE ON WALKING AND CYCLING IN WORCESTERSHIRE

Summary

1. The Panel will receive an update on developments relating to Walking and Cycling Schemes in Worcestershire as part of its work programme. The Panel last reviewed active travel in November 2020 and has requested an update to include delivery of schemes.
2. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways and Transport and the Assistant Directors of the Economy and Infrastructure Directorate have been invited to the meeting.

Background

3. The Panel reviewed active travel in Worcestershire in both June and November 2020, including information on changes to Government policy and a table of schemes with status updates.
4. Government Policy remains as outlined in November 2020, and is set out in Gear Change; A Bold Vision for Walking and Cycling outlined in its 4 themes:
 - a. Better streets for cycling and walking
 - b. Cycling and walking at the heart of decision making
 - c. Empowering and encouraging local authorities
 - d. Enabling people to cycle and protecting them when they do
5. This is supported by Cycling Infrastructure Design Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/20 which provides guidance on delivering high quality cycle infrastructure based on the following overarching principles:
 - e. Coherent
 - f. Direct
 - g. Safe
 - h. Comfortable and convenient
6. In January 2022, the Department of Transport commissioned a new executive agency which will be responsible for improving standards of cycling and walking infrastructure in England. The agency, Active Travel England, will formally commence work in summer 2022. In addition to work on standards, it is also expected to be a statutory consultee on planning applications as well as acting as a support mechanism to local authorities and an 'auditing body' reviewing the standard of new infrastructure to ensure it meets the principles of design and policy set out in LTN 1/20.

7. Funding for walking and cycling continues to be drawn together from multiple sources, including developer contributions (Section 106), member capital funds, specific grants and from other bodies such as Parish Councils.

8. During the financial year 2021/22 the Council secured additional funding from the Department for Transport Capability Fund for a project officer to develop Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) and project development. These plans set out, at a strategic level, the network of walking and cycling routes in a town, connecting to key trip attractors.

Walking and Cycling Scheme Update

9. A summary of schemes that are in development, delivery or complete is detailed in Appendix 1.

10. A number of significant schemes are being developed and delivered for walking and cycling including:

- a) Hampton Bridge, Evesham. This scheme will provide a new pedestrian and cycle bridge over the river Avon to link the communities of Hampton and Evesham. This provides a more direct route for commuting, retail or leisure across the river into the town, avoiding the lengthy diversion to Abbey Bridge.
- b) Kepax Bridge, Worcester. This new walking and cycling bridge will provide an additional link across the River Severn from Ghulevelt Park across to Hallow Road across the open space of the former Kepax landfill. Following the grant of planning permission in 2021, some early works have commenced on site prior to the main works commencing later in 2022.
- c) Broomhall Way bridge over the Southern Link Road opened in July 2021, providing additional connectivity between the existing communities of Worcester and St. Peters and Norton in time for the new development at South Worcester Urban extension.
- d) The package of measures funded through the (Emergency) Active Travel Fund have all been delivered with schemes in Redditch, Worcester and Kidderminster.
- e) The (Emergency) Active Travel Fund also supported the delivery of the walking and cycling routes which form part of the Pershore Infrastructure Improvement Scheme including routes along Wyre Road and the Northern Link Road.
- f) Worcester Towns Fund bid includes a package of active travel to deliver:
 - a. Improvements to the Worcester and Birmingham Canal towpath, linking Diglis to Sixways
 - b. Improvements to Worcester riverside between Diglis and St Marks Close
 - c. Links to RonkswoodSubject to final approval of the business case, the County Council will deliver these on behalf of Worcester City Council.
- g) The National Productivity Investment Fund package of routes in Bromsgrove has been completed and all routes delivered.
- h) Further routes have been delivered in Bromsgrove as part of the early works packages of the A38 Bromsgrove Route Enhancement Programme (A38 BREP) including additional crossing and shared use cycle and walking route

to South Bromsgrove High School. A further package of routes is proposed as part of the A38 BREP improvements.

- i) Walking and cycling routes from Powick and Kempsey were included in the Levelling Up Fund round 1 submission to Government in 2021 providing connectivity to Shrub Hill railway station and Worcester city centre. Unfortunately, this bid was unsuccessful, however a round 2 bid is currently in development to include walking and cycling.
- j) Kidderminster Towns Fund; canal tow path improvements proposed to enhance the user experience on this route for walkers and cyclists.

11. In addition, a series of smaller schemes are being developed and delivered funded from Section 106 agreements. New housing development is also expected to deliver walking and cycling facilities within the developments themselves. This can be in the form of shared routes such as Norton Farm in Bromsgrove or separate dedicated routes such as a request for the upgrade of an informal path along the east side of River Stour providing off-road connectivity from the development site (Former Carpets of Worth) to a supermarket.

12. The Council continues to monitor rates of cycling in the county. Appendix 2 provides an update on cycling rates in the County between 2020 and 2022 with the national rates published by the DfT for comparison.

Public Right of Way Improvement Project

13. The additional capital funding for the Public Right of Way Improvement Project has allowed the Public Rights of Way Team to make substantial improvements to the wider Public Rights of Way network. Some highlights to date include:

- During 2021/22 almost 4,000 defect and enforcement reports were resolved around twice pre-covid levels;
- Installation of 1,800 roadside signs and waymarking improvements which help to identify paths and providing users greater confidence;
- Repair or replacement of over 100 timber bridges;
- Refurbishment of a small number of larger structures, such as the historical cast iron Austcliffe Bridge, built in 1782, in Wolverley and Cookley (due to be completed end of May);
- £200,000 investment in re-surfacing urban “A routes” public rights of way, delivered by Ringway alongside the Footway Programme.”

Purpose of the Meeting

14. The Panel is asked to:

- consider and comment on the latest information on walking and cycling
- note the status of walking and cycling projects
- determine whether any further information or scrutiny is required at this stage and agree any comments to highlight to the Cabinet Member.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – Walking and Cycling Scheme Update

Appendix 2 – Worcestershire Cycling Data 2020-2022

Contact Points

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Agenda and Minutes of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 19 June and 9 November 2020. [agenda and minutes](#)

[All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website here.](#)