

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**ENVIRONMENT
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

TUESDAY 29 JUNE 2004 AT 10.00 A.M.

Agenda Item No:

7

CYCLING FACILITIES

Report of the Director of Environment

Author: Morag Saunders, Strategy Development Manager, Hertfordshire
Highways
[Tel: 01707 356567]

Executive Member: Derrick Ashley

1. Purpose of the Report

To consider the request by Councillor Brian York to scrutinise the County Council's current approach towards delivering cycling facilities.

2. Summary

Cycling facilities in Hertfordshire are primarily delivered through the County Cycling Programme of the Local Transport Plan (LTP) where Strategic Cycle routes have been developed and delivered through a close partnership with Sustrans. Cycling facilities are also delivered through other programmes in the LTP, such as the Area Plans and the Rural Strategy. In addition to this there are long sections of Rights of Way in the County that provide access for cyclists.

3. Conclusion

The Committee is asked to decide how they wish to scrutinise the issues surrounding the development and the provision of cycling facilities. Possible options for further scrutiny could be a short-term topic group, a more detailed report, or questioning officers at the meeting. Alternatively the committee may prefer this to be carried out through the development of a new cycling strategy in the next LTP.

4. Background

- 4.1 The request to scrutinise cycling facilities came from Councillor Brian York following a letter and report he and other members received on cycling from a local resident. In the letter the resident expresses disappointment and concern with the quality of the Great North Way Route. The report sets out a number of specific concerns. The resident considers that this National Cycle Network Route does not reflect well on the County Council or Sustrans. At the time of drafting this committee report, permission was being sought from the resident to make the report publicly available. If obtained a copy will be circulated under separate cover.
- 4.2 As well as the detailed report, the resident specifically sought answers to two questions. The first was whether Councillors could get improvements made to what the resident considers is a most unsatisfactory project. The second is whether Councillors could persuade the officers who commission cycling facilities to include cyclists at the early stages of cycling route development.
- 4.3 The resident concludes the letter by expressing concern that taxes are being wasted on providing poor cycling facilities.

5. Actions to address issues raised in correspondence

Question 1 – Improvements to unsatisfactory cycling facilities

- 5.1 Following a request by the Chairman of the Transport Panel, Roy Clements, officers sent a detailed response to the report on the Great North Way. A copy of this response is attached in Appendix 1. Wherever possible, actions were proposed to alleviate the concerns raised. The resident sent a further response to the Executive Member, Derrick Ashley, saying that he had received the officers' response and was not satisfied with it. Derrick Ashley's response included a suggestion that to avoid protracted correspondence it may be helpful if officers met the resident to try and resolve ongoing concerns. That meeting took place at the end of May a number of concerns were discussed in detail.

Question 2 – Request to include cyclists at the early stages of cycle route development

- 5.2 Officers are aware of the importance and value of using local cyclists' knowledge and expertise with regard to providing well designed schemes and local cycling groups are involved during the design and development stage of all of the current County cycling funded schemes. It is proposed to continue this practice for future schemes.

6. Current Approach to Delivering Cycling Facilities

6.1 At present the implementation of cycling facilities is generally funded through the LTP as follows:

- The priority of the County Cycling Programme is the delivery of the National Cycle Network Routes, which were proposed in 1995 by Sustrans and subsequently adopted by the County Council. The County Council works closely in partnership with Sustrans and other key user groups to deliver the routes. To date over 60% of the NCN routes in Hertfordshire have been achieved.
- Area and Town Transport Plans include a comprehensive network of existing and proposed cycling facilities. These are funded through the LTP process.
- Work is currently in hand to improve links with the various rail operators with regard to providing new and improved cycle storage at commuter stations in the county. Cycle storage facilities are also provided through individual schemes and the Safer Routes to School programme.
- The LTP Rural Strategy is an important tool in providing routes that can be used by cyclists, which link rural settlements and services. These include the Quiet Lanes initiative that helps improve links between urban roads and the minor road network, Greenways which provide off road non motorised routes and improvements to access, surface condition, signage and promotion for Rights of Ways routes.

6.2 The delivery of schemes through LTP funding is monitored annually and the results are referred to when future funding is allocated to authorities. For the period 2003/04 Hertfordshire had a target to achieve a total of 203 cycling schemes (this includes cycling parking facilities etc). In total 212 schemes (104%) were delivered.

6.3 In addition to the LTP programmes, close partnership working enables additional funding to be sought through a number of other sources, including District Councils, Groundwork Hertfordshire, Sustrans (New Opportunity Funding) and money from Section 106 agreements. These partnerships have enabled more cycling facilities and promotional and educational work to be undertaken than could be funded solely through the LTP.

7. Future Cycling Facilities

7.1 In September 2003 a report was taken to the Transport Panel which set out actions to deal with LTP performance indicators which were not on course to meet their targets. The 'Number of Cycling Trips' was identified as an area in need of action following concerns with regard to recent target data.

7.2 As a result of this report officers developed a new monitoring and target system for cycling. This new system is to include eighteen permanent sites that are measured each year and detailed “before and after” monitoring of all new cycling schemes. This should enable a more comprehensive view to be made on what types of schemes are most successful in Hertfordshire.

7.3 At the end of last year, the National Cycling Strategy Board (NSC) published an assessment of the Council’s performance in cycling, which included a number of recommendations. Whilst recognising that there were areas requiring improvement in the delivery of cycling facilities in Hertfordshire, Steven Norris, the Chair of the National Cycling Board for England, was encouraged by Hertfordshire’s progress and said the following:

“No doubt you will be pleased with the results of the assessment for your authority, especially as it compares well with the national average. However, whilst we are confident your authority will continue to build upon existing successes, there are still some areas in which additional worthwhile gains could be made that would help towards delivering the national targets for increased cycling. Indeed we feel that authorities such as yours often hold very considerable potential for helping us meet this goal”.

A report of the assessment’s recommendations and the implications for the County was presented to the Transport Panel on 17 February 2004. A table setting out the recommendations and proposed actions by HCC is attached at Appendix 2.

7.4 In addition to the actions endorsed by the Transport Panel, a number of other activities are being undertaken to improve the delivery of cycling facilities in Hertfordshire. These include taking part in a Regional Benchmarking project, which offers the opportunity for the County to address some of the issues raised in the audit, particularly in terms of the design of cycling facilities.

7.5 The delivery of cycling facilities in Hertfordshire is currently under review through the development of a new monitoring and target programme, and the review of the cycling strategy. The proposed changes to the monitoring and targets and the cycling strategy are being considered through the County Council’s Transport Panel. Views are also being sought from the Hertfordshire Cycle Forum, which consists of officers from district councils and other partner organisations and representatives of cycle groups. This is in addition to the responses that will be received through the statutory LTP consultation, which will be undertaken during September to November 2004.

8. Financial Implications

Cycling facilities are funded through various programmes in the LTP and other sources such as Section 106 Agreements. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

9. Access to Service Implications

Provision of good cycling facilities helps to improve access to facilities in the County.

10. Conclusion

The Committee is asked to decide how they wish to scrutinise the issues surrounding the development of the provision of cycling facilities. A possible option for further scrutiny might be a short-term topic group, a more detailed report, or questioning officers at the meeting. Alternatively the committee may prefer this to be carried out through the development of a new cycling strategy in the next LTP.

OFFICER RESPONSE ON THE RESIDENTS REPORT - THE GREAT NORTH WAY

Dear

Report on the Great North Way Cycle Route

Thank you for the recent report, which I have been asked to respond to by Councillor Roy Clements the Chairman of the Hertfordshire Transport Panel and Derrick Ashley our Executive Member. I appreciate the time that you have taken to bring these concerns to our attention. I will try and respond to each of your points in turn.

On the general point of signage, Nigel Brigham at Sustrans suggested when the route was formerly opened that their rangers would appreciate the chance to be involved in auditing the route. Gill Taylor contacted the Sustrans ranger a couple of times over the last 18 months to request that the route was ridden, with particular emphasis on looking at the signage. Unfortunately she received no response. I have spoken to Nigel and he will contact the rangers that cover the route to see if a regular audit can be set up. In the meantime we will try where possible to incorporate the suggested signage improvements you have suggested.

Para 2.1 – I agree that it is unclear what happens to the Great North Way route as it enters the boundary of the London Borough of Enfield. Over the last 18 months Gill Taylor has written a number of letters to officers in Enfield with regard to signage being completed along their section of the route. In February of this year Gill received a response confirming that Enfield have given consent for work through to Hadley Wood Station. This work is to be undertaken by Enfield. Gill has written to them to ask for a timetable of when they propose to undertake the works. I will let you know when we have received their response.

Para 2.2 – I have spoken to our design engineer. Dancers Hill Road was considered a country lane with the main carriageway of the road recommended for pedal cyclists. The route was marked with cycle signs with the presence of cyclists reinforced by road markings and cyclist warning signs. The route went through an extensive consultation process and received safety advice.

I appreciate that it may be unclear that the route continues through the gate at the end of Dancers Hill. I am currently investigating who owns the gate and how the opening to the side can be made more visible. We will also provide directional signs on this section showing destinations and route numbers to confirm to riders that they are indeed on the Great North way. When this work is being done we will make sure that the fallen tree is removed.

Paras 2.3 and 2.4 – I note that you raised concerns about the use of a culvert and flooding on this section in a report that you sent to us in July 2002. I have spoken to Nigel Brigham at Sustrans to find out if flooding is considered acceptable on a National Cycle Network route.

Nigel said that he is aware of a number of other routes in the country, some of which he considers to be amongst the best and most popular, which are also subject to flooding. However I do accept that there should be some sort of forewarning for cyclists that this section of the route is prone to flooding. Nigel Bringham also suggested that an alternative route could possibly signed in times of flooding, I will endeavour to investigate whether this can be achieved with the obvious constraints of the motorway.

The access to the culvert was built under strong constraints imposed by the Environment Agency. Also the improvements that were made were built for both pedestrians and cyclists and the gates and barriers were installed to insure safety of all users. Cyclists' speeds through the culvert should be kept to a minimum due to the potential presence of both pedestrian and equestrians. High Speeds through such a narrow and confined area could potentially cause conflict with these users, also visibility is poor through the culvert and necessitates cyclists to take care when using the culvert.

Para 2.5 – I am currently investigating who the barriers belong to and will contact you with suggested solutions when this has been established.

Para 2.6 – I have forwarded on your concerns to our Area Office who deal with local maintenance issues.

Para 2.7 - I have spoken to our design engineer. The shared use facility was introduced as low pedestrian and cyclist flows were anticipated. The width provided was a minimum 1.8m wide utilising the original footpath. The carriageway was considered too narrow to provide an on-road facility. The route is marked at intervals with signs as a route for use by pedal cyclists and pedestrians.

Para 2.8 – Wherever possible existing street furniture is used to fix signs onto. I accept that the sign illustrated in your photograph is not ideal for cyclists. I will look into a sign to being erected on a post prior to the junction on the footway, so that it can be seen in plenty of time by cyclists.

Paras 2.9, 2.10 and 2.11 – I have asked Nigel Bringham if he will ride and report back on the signage along this section of the route.

Para 3 – I am pleased to report that our Cabinet has recently approved our Integrated Works Programme for 04/05, which includes advanced preparation for a Traffic Order Review and sign upgrading of the Stevenage Cycle Network. I will ensure that the design engineer reviewing this part of the network is aware of the comments in this report. I have already given our design engineer all the previous correspondence we had on the Network, including the report you sent to us in 1998.

Thank you again for your report and for the time and the effort that was obviously put into producing it. I hope that you consider that the proposed actions go some way to alleviating your concerns with this route. If you have any further comments, on this or any other cycling routes in the county, please send them to me and I will endeavour to resolve them, wherever possible.

Yours sincerely,

Morag Saunders
Strategy Development Manager
(Cycling and Safer Routes)

NATIONAL CYCLING STRATEGY BOARD REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSED ACTIONS BY HCC REPORTED TO TRANSPORT PANEL.

The NCS report undertaken by the English Regions Cycling Development Team (ERCDDT) made nine recommendations where it was considered that improvements could be made to help deliver increased cycling in Hertfordshire. The table below sets out each recommendation and the suggested actions to achieve these improvements.

No	ERCDDT Recommendation	Proposed action by HCC
1	Adopt a 'mode hierarchy' policy with clear appropriate high priority for cyclists.	The Transport Panel has not previously favoured this approach but it could be explored as part of the development of the next LTP. The Area/Town Plans will be identifying mode priorities for each corridor.
2	Reaffirm and promulgate the 'hierarchy of solutions' approach to infrastructure provision	The Area/Town Plans will be identifying mode priorities for each corridor. This will be reaffirmed in the next LTP and will also be promoted at the design level through the User Audit, which is currently being developed.
3	Allocate more staff time to developing and implementing the cycling schemes programme	Resources on the client side have increased slightly over the last year with the appointment of a new member of staff. This is considered adequate at present, although there have been resource issues with retaining and employing staff within the design team.
4	Allocate adequate funding to accelerate delivery of the cycling schemes programme	It is considered that funding from the cycling programme and the area plans is currently adequate. Additional funding is sought from other sources where possible e.g. Section 106 and New Opportunity Funding (NOF).
5	Allocate resources to apply Cycle Audits to schemes ERCDDT have also recommended to the DfT that Cycle Audits are made mandatory for all LTP schemes.	This will be done through the User Audit system, which is currently being developed. The cycle audit will be an integral part of the User Audit.
6	Review and revise cycle infrastructure guidance to ensure best practice	Within the User Audit Manual the most appropriate good practice guidance notes will be identified. The Roads in Hertfordshire Design Guide is also currently being reviewed.

	ERDCT have also recommended a need for the DfT to review National guidance in order to ensure appropriate provision of facilities for cyclists, especially on the highway.	
7	Review Development Control procedures to ensure that the 'hierarchy of solutions' approach and best practice is implemented in new development, including off-site links and route improvements.	This will be achieved through the inclusion of a 'hierarchy of solutions' within the revised version of the Roads in Hertfordshire Design Guide for new developments, which is currently being reviewed.
8	Hertfordshire should set targets to increase both the level of training and the proportion that is carried out mainly on road. It should investigate how other authorities have linked training to safe routes programmes, particularly secondary schools	<p>This will continue to be achieved by level 2 National Standard on road cycle training being offered to all schools in the county.</p> <p>A level 3 National Standard on road cycling training for secondary school pupils is currently being developed and introduced.</p> <p>The Road Safety Unit will continue to offer training to both primary and secondary schools that are involved in the Safer Routes to School programme</p>
9	Raise the local profile of cycling by developing a more coherent programme of year-round promotional activities and well-distributed literature.	<p>Will use the Herts Cycle Forum to identify how a more coherent programme of promotional activities may be developed</p> <p>Also continue to use links with CMS's 'Walks and More Programme' and work on updating current literature and maps.</p>