

# Report of the Cycling Strategy Sub Group



September 2015

## **1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 There has been a significant growth in cycling in North Tyneside over recent years, much of which takes place during the working week for commuting to and from work, schools and shops. North Tyneside also has a significant network of cycle routes which are used for commuting and also for leisure purposes. A third of residents in the borough do not have access to a motor vehicle.
- 1.2 It is common knowledge that regular cycling has many benefits including to health, through increased activity, and the environment through reduced levels of pollution.
- 1.3 North Tyneside has much to be proud about regarding provision for cycling in the borough including the Waggonways which are networks of off-road cycling routes.
- 1.4 The refresh of the Cycling Strategy is an opportunity to look back to examine what has worked and to identify what still needs to be done to bring to fruition the 2030 Vision to make North Tyneside the cycling borough of the North East.
- 1.5 It is suggested that the provision of cycling facilities based on international best practice should be at the forefront of everything we do, from working with developers to ensure that cycling facilities are introduced at the design stage through to ensuring that highways schemes are designed with cycling in mind. The health benefits of regular cycling should also be promoted and form part of the Authority's strategy to increase resident's activity, with the consequential benefits on a number of services provided by the Authority and its partners such as the NHS.
- 1.6 The Sub Group has made 4 recommendations which will ensure that the refreshed cycling strategy will lead to improvements for cycling in North Tyneside and allow the Authority to maximise investment in cycling in the future.

## **2. Reason for the Study**

- 2.1 The Cycling Strategy Sub-group was established by the Environment Sub-committee in September 2014 with the aim of examining the current North Tyneside Cycling Strategy 2010 – 2014 and identifying what should be included in the new 2015 – 2019 Cycling Strategy for North Tyneside to ensure that it could be used to improve cycling in North Tyneside and also to maximise investment in cycling in North Tyneside.

- 2.2 As part of the review, the Sub-group sought the views of representatives of local cycling groups, the Royal National Institute for the Blind and Sustrans, a national cycling charity. In addition members also heard from a number of local residents who walked and cycled on a regular basis.
- 2.3 The Sub-group examined a number of local transport policies including the Tyne and Wear Local Transport Plan (LTP3), the North Tyneside Road Safety Strategy and the Highway Asset Management Plan. The Sub Group also examined the Transport and Highways Supplementary Planning Document (LDD12)
- 2.4 The Sub-group also carried out desk based research to identify examples of good practice both nationally and internationally.
- 2.5 Members of the Environment Sub-committee felt that it was an important issue to address and made it a priority topic for its 2014/15 work programme.

### 3. **Method and Remit**

- 3.1 The Environment Sub-committee agreed that establishing a Sub-group would be the most appropriate means of undertaking this piece of work.
- 3.2 The following members of the Environment Sub-committee volunteered to serve on the Sub-group:

Councillor Brian Burdis (Chair)

Councillor Joanne Cassidy

Councillor Gary Madden

- 3.3 The Sub-group met on 5 occasions to complete its work.
- 3.4 At its first meeting the Sub-group agreed a scope for the study and identified the following objectives:
  - To ensure that the 2015-2019 Cycling Strategy can be used to improve cycling in North Tyneside.
  - To ensure that the Cycling Strategy can be used to maximise investment in cycling facilities in North Tyneside.
- 3.5 As part of its deliberations the Sub group also identified a number of key questions to which it required answers:
  - Are the objectives of the 2030 Vision in the Cycling Strategy still appropriate?

- Should North Tyneside's cycling network aspirations be more clearly defined in the strategy?
- Are there additional ways in which cycling can be promoted as a main mode of transport?
- Should infrastructure for cycling in North Tyneside be closer to international best practice?

3.6 In order to obtain the relevant evidence to complete the study, the Sub-group undertook desk based research and met with officers from Environment, Housing and Leisure, Public Health and the Council's technical partner Capita. In addition the Sub-group met with a number of residents and representatives of Newcastle City Council, The Royal National Institute for the Blind, North Tyneside Riders, North Tyneside Cycling Campaign and SUSTRANS.

#### **4. Findings and Evidence**

4.1 The health benefits of regular cycling are widely acknowledged. Cycling can be part of a regular exercise regime which can help to reduce obesity and contribute to a healthy lifestyle. Cycling can also be better for the environment as it does not contribute to air pollution.

4.2 Cycling provides an alternative to the use of the car for short journeys such as commuting to work, going to the shops and for recreation purposes. It was noted that in North Tyneside a third of households do not have access to a motor vehicle.

4.3 There are a network of cycle routes in North Tyneside which are based on the Waggonways, the former rail lines which in 2000 were converted for leisure purposes, including cycling, walking and horse riding following a successful bid for over £2m worth of funding, from the Government's Liveability Fund, to transform more than 30 miles of routes. These routes provide facilities for off-road cycling whilst providing safe, pleasant and convenient links between various parts of the borough.

4.4 In addition to the Waggonways there are a number of cycle routes in North Tyneside including 3 National Cycling Routes:

- Reivers Cycle Route (NCN10)
- Hadrian's Cycle Way (NNC72)
- North Sea Cycle Route (NCN1)

4.5 It was pleasing to note that the growth in cycling in North Tyneside over the last decade had been the highest in Tyne and Wear, with the number of journeys made by bicycle having increased by 250% between 2004 and 2015. It was notable that much of this growth had been higher during the working week, which indicated that there was a strong demand for commuter and general purpose cycling in addition to cycling purely for leisure. Department

for Transport statistics show that North Tyneside had the highest proportion of residents who regularly cycled (at least 5 times a week) in the North East which reflected positively the investment in cycling infrastructure and training which had already been made.

4.6 It was explained that the information on the number of cycle journeys was provided through electronic counters located at 15 strategic areas in the borough which are monitored by the Tyne and Wear Traffic and Accident Data Unit. In line with Department of Transport guidance the data collected covers journeys made Monday to Friday. Over the past 4 years this data has shown that North Tyneside has seen an increase of 83% in journeys made by cycle from 680,000 in 2010 to 1,250,000 in 2014.

4.7 Examples of the data collected at various points across the borough are set out below and show a significant increase in cycling at Cobalt, even part way through the year:

Site	Trips for all of 2014	Trips up to April 2015
Earsdon	68,000	56,000
Percy Main	39,000	36,000
Coast Road (west of Station Road only)	91,000	78,000
Willington Quay	65,000	56,000
Cobalt	95,000	109,000

4.8 The trend of significant year-on-year increases in cycling has continued since the first Cycling Strategy was adopted.

#### 4.9 National Position

4.10 A wider interest in cycling more generally has been reflected in recent calls for cycling improvements at a national level, such as the 'Get Britain Cycling' report published by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Cycling in April 2013.

4.11 The Infrastructure Act 2015 recently received Royal Assent. Under Section 21 the Government is committed to produce a Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy, which has to include specific objectives, and details of the financial resources which would be made available to achieve those objectives.

4.12 Prior to this, the Department for Transport (DfT) had held an informal consultation, in October-November 2014, on a draft Cycling Delivery Plan.

The Government's response to the consultation, published in March 2015, stated that the national Active Travel Consortium would be requested to develop a partnership model for local authorities wishing to work with Government to further increase/support cycling and walking in their areas. Once this model was developed, it was likely that there would be a competitive bidding process for authorities to bid for funding for specific schemes.

4.13 It was suggested that it would be helpful for North Tyneside Council to have a number of suitable schemes on the shelf, designed and costed, to be ready to bid for available funding.

#### 4.14 **2030 Vision**

4.15 It was noted that the key objectives of the 2030 Vision were to:

- Provide a seamless on-road and off-road strategic network for cycling in North Tyneside;
- Promote cycling to residents and visitors as a healthy sustainable travel option;
- Provide links to the National Cycle network and other neighbouring networks;
- Put in place the infrastructure to support large scale cycling e.g. cycle parking;
- Offer on road cycle training to all North Tyneside Residents; and
- Promote equality, accessibility and independent mobility for all.

4.16 The Sub-group considered that the key objectives in the 2030 Vision are still appropriate, however there was scope to add a further key objective relating to new developments, requiring developers, where appropriate, to contribute to improvements in the cycling network linking to the development, as well as providing for cycling access within the development: this would reflect best practice.

4.17 According to Sustrans, the national cycling charity, there needed to be clear guidance provided for developers at an early stage so that they were aware of what was required from them in relation to provision for cycling. This would ensure that the provision of cycling facilities could be incorporated into the development at the design stage and not treated as an add-on which would make it more cost effective, and therefore more likely to be delivered. It was also suggested that the guidance should provide comprehensive details of the standards required such as width of the cycle route and the surface treatments.

4.18 Cycling should be an integral part of the design and construction of all highway schemes. Indeed cycling should be placed at the centre of all council policy and planning.

- 4.19 One of the objectives of the 2010-14 strategy was to produce and implement relevant Local Development Documents, which would ensure that all aspects of cycling are fully integrated into new developments (LDD12 'Transport and Highways' was adopted in 2010 and is currently being refreshed): this objective should be amended as above to more robustly reflect best practice with respect to cycling.
- 4.20 The Sub-group examined the supplementary planning document Local Development Document LDD12 'Transport and Highways' and welcomed the references to the need for all developments to include high quality cycle parking and storage facilities. The Sub-group also welcomed the commitment to maintain and further increase/support the high level of cycle use in North Tyneside and the requirement for all developments to be accessible for cycling. However it was considered that there was a lack of detailed information available to developers about the standards expected in relation to cycling provision in and around their development.
- 4.21 It was suggested that LDD12 'Transport and Highways' should be updated to better reflect best practice in relation to cycling.

**Recommendation 1** - Cabinet be requested to endorse the addition of a further key objective to the 2030 Vision, relating to new developments; to agree that an updated set of objectives be incorporated into the 2015-19 Cycling Strategy when drafted; and to agree that the appropriate Local Development Document should be amended, as part of its review, to more robustly reflect best practice with respect to cycling

#### **4.22 Cycling Routes**

- 4.23 A cycle network is based on a grid of primary and secondary routes with the primary routes acting like trunk roads linking major areas such as city centres, transport terminals, etc, and the secondary routes which linked into the primary routes. It was suggested that primary cycle routes should mainly be cycle tracks outside of the carriageway, although it was recognised that on quieter streets cycle tracks could be accommodated within the highway. Primary routes needed to have more efficient junctions which gave priority to, and protection, for those cycling. It has been suggested that cycling should be given a high priority when making alterations to existing road junctions and creating new junctions on primary routes. It was also suggested that provision to improve facilities for cycling should be taken into consideration when bidding for funding for highways improvements schemes. This would require cycling routes to be identified before bids were developed and submitted. It was also suggested that consideration also needed to be given to ensuring that unrelated transport and development schemes did not adversely impact on important cycle routes.
- 4.24 It was suggested that ideally secondary cycle routes should be designed to the same high standard as the primary routes.

- 4.25 As part of a holistic approach to cycling it was suggested that work needed to be undertaken to identify where the cycle, car and bus networks overlapped, which sections were most heavily used and where there were missing links such as bridges and tunnels. The use of census and demographic data could be used to make funding bids and to make a case for developer contributions to specific schemes in North Tyneside.
- 4.26 It was noted that the authority had spent a lot of money introducing 20mph zones in all residential streets and around schools in the borough to reduce vehicle speeds, reduce accidents and to encourage cycling. When the 20mph zones had bedded in consideration could be given to the introduction of cycle paths as part of a step change in transport provision.
- 4.27 It was suggested that North Tyneside's cycling network aspirations should be more clearly defined in the 2015-19 strategy, e.g. by identifying specific routes as strategic cycling routes: this could take the form of a diagrammatic 'tube style map' of routes.
- 4.28 In addition it was also suggested that a North Tyneside-specific target for increasing cycling should be set, in addition to the target set at Tyne and Wear level (which approximates to a 7% increase each year up to 2021) as part of the Local Transport Plan, which in due course is to be replaced by a new Transport Plan for the North East. This target would over time provide evidence of the success, or not, of the measures adopted to further increase/support cycling in the Borough.

**Recommendation 2:** Cabinet be requested to ensure that the 2015-19 strategy includes a clear indication of strategic cycling routes and a clear indication that initiatives will be developed to further support and increase cycling; and to agree that a target be set for increasing cycling in North Tyneside.

- 4.29 There are numerous additional ways in which cycling can be promoted as a main mode of transport.
- 4.30 As previously mentioned the health benefits of regular cycling are widely acknowledged and according to the Government Cycle Delivery Plan "Cycling means healthier, fitter citizens, less congested cities, less pollution".
- 4.31 It was noted that the public health team were able to provide cost/benefit analysis of the benefits of cycling which could be used when making bids for funding. These could be used to demonstrate that the benefits of increased activity, such as by regular cycling, could have a major impact on the health of the community leading to significantly lower demand for council and NHS services. The collection and analysis of such data is regularly refreshed to make it more appropriate for its purpose.
- 4.32 The Health Economic Assessment Tool (HEAT), which was updated in 2014, was designed to allow an economic assessment of the health benefits of



cycling (or walking) by estimating the value of reduced mortality which results from specified amounts of cycling (or walking). The tool can be used when planning a new piece of cycling or walking infrastructure, to make the case for investment. It can also be used to illustrate the consequences of a particular course of action or to provide data for use in more comprehensive economic appraisals.

- 4.33 The Sub-group noted that there were many examples of various departments within the authority being involved in the promotion of cycling within the borough. Sports and Leisure produce individual cycle route leaflets based around the Waggonways network to encourage recreational cycling. The Go Smarter scheme is a partnership between the authority and schools to encourage pupils to travel to school in a more sustainable way. There are also a number of individual projects/programmes to encourage people to take more exercise and be more active, some of which involved cycling.
- 4.34 In addition actions by other departments within the authority can have an impact on cycling within the borough. The planning department, for example, can support developers to provide appropriate facilities for cycling as part of the planning process. A significant part of the provision can be incorporated at the design stage so that there is no or limited additional cost associated with the development. As previously mentioned the provision of appropriate guidance in a timely manner so that a developer was clear about what was expected of him/her would lead to an increased provision of facilities for cycling in the borough. It is also suggested that the authority should lead by example when developing its own land.
- 4.35 It is noted that the provision of public health services has been transferred to the authority. As outlined above the service has a number of tools available to it to encourage increased physical activity, including cycling. It is suggested that the various departments might benefit from pooling their resources to further increase/support cycling across the borough.
- 4.36 A corporate approach should be ensured, including highways, planning and tourism. There are greater opportunities to align public health delivery with cycling improvements, as has been the case in Newcastle.
- 4.37 It was acknowledged that there was a lot of expertise in the community which could be tapped to encourage cycling within the borough. Representatives of the various cycling groups within the borough have been very generous in providing advice and suggestions to the members of the Sub-group and it is suggested that their knowledge could be utilised further through partnership working on individual schemes or in a more formal process.
- 4.38 Partnership working, including with residents, local businesses and voluntary sector organisations, is also a valuable means of both promoting cycling as a method of transport, and obtaining relevant funding, access to which is frequently on a competitive basis.

- 4.39 The Sub-group was also advised that the authority also promoted cycling through the Bikeability Scheme, the national standard for cycle training which replaced the former Cycling Proficiency scheme. The scheme is funded from a specific annual grant from central government.
- 4.40 In North Tyneside Schools Bikeability training had been delivered to:
- 447 pupils during 2012/13;
  - 1016 during 2013/14; and
  - 768 pupils during 2014/15.
- 4.41 Reference was also made to the “Tyne and Wear Schools GO Smarter” scheme under which a number of initiatives to support and encourage sustainable active travel had been developed. Additional funding had been obtained to continue some of the initiatives during 2015/16. The full programme of initiatives had included:
- Balance Bikes – the project gave schools access to balance bikes which were small bicycles suitable for young children and which allowed them to practice riding a bike and balancing before learning to use pedals.
  - Bike it – in partnership with Sustrans, a dedicated officer promoted cycling directly to children at participating schools. Bike it activities had involved 31 schools. In addition the Families Enjoying Active Travel (FEAT 1st) initiative encouraged school children and their families to take part in cycling and walking through a programme of events. 21 schools had been involved in this initiative.
  - Cycling and walking infrastructure improvements
  - Good quality cycle and child scooter parking had been installed in a number of schools
  - The Bike Shed provided cycle storage and training space in Richardson Dees Park
- 4.42 Many of the representatives of the cycling groups explained that in order for change to happen there needed to be a political will for it to happen. It was noted that senior politicians, both locally and nationally had expressed the view that cycling should be encouraged, for its health benefits, the benefits for the environment and as a means of transport.
- 4.43 There also needed to be oversight of the implementation of the actions contained within the amended cycling strategy to ensure that the aims of the strategy were delivered. Whilst this can be achieved through the scrutiny process it was suggested that the appropriate cabinet member would be best placed to ensure that the strategy was delivered
- 4.44 To ensure that cycling continued to have a high priority within the authority it was suggested that an Annual Information Report on cycling should be provided to Cabinet. This will provide up-to-date information, raise the profile

of cycling among senior officers and members, and help to highlight opportunities for joint working.

**Recommendation 3: Cabinet be requested to ensure that a corporate approach (including Public Health, Highways, Planning and Tourism) to the promotion of cycling in North Tyneside is adopted; and agree that an Annual Information Report on cycling should be provided to Cabinet.**

- 4.45 As part of the study members examined the provision of facilities for cycling in a number of locations to identify what top class cycling facilities looked like. It was noted that as a cycling nation the Netherlands was head and shoulders above the United Kingdom. The Dutch model for the provision of infrastructure for cycling appeared to be very comprehensive although it was acknowledged that this had not been achieved overnight. It had been a long process over a number of years. In Groningen for example it had taken 30 years to get to where it is today, where 61% of all journeys are made by cycle and 70% of all journeys to education establishments are made by cycle.
- 4.46 In addition to the provision of cycle parking at transport hubs and the restrictions imposed on through-traffic there were a number of additional facilities provided for cycling. Future plans included rain sensitive traffic lights which prioritised cycling when it rained and heated cycleways which prevented the build up of snow and ice.
- 4.47 Infrastructure in North Tyneside should be closer to international best practice, to cater for and encourage the increasing demand for cycling and to make cycling safer.
- 4.48 It is acknowledged that the simplest way of improving facilities to support cycling is at the design stage when such facilities can be developed as part of a development scheme and not as an “add-on”. The provision of clear guidance for developers is key to this process. This guidance should be based on international best practice and should be rigorously enforced.
- 4.49 Cycling infrastructure which meets the standards of international best practice should form part of the design of all highway schemes and public realm schemes and be secured as part of new developments, e.g. those delivered through the Local Plan.
- 4.50 The development of design guidance for North Tyneside would assist in securing cycle infrastructure which meets best practice standards, by providing clarity for developers and their contractors.
- 4.51 Maintenance**
- 4.52 Consideration was also given the subject of maintenance of the existing cycle network. Reference was made by representatives of both cycling groups that maintenance was a key priority. Examples were given of potholes and unsafe

drain covers which made it unsafe. Simple actions such as changing the orientation of drainage covers so that the bicycle wheel did not become trapped would be of significant benefit to all road users.

- 4.53 Reference was also made to the maintenance required to the bridleways and other of road cycle paths. It was noted that the Authority had considerable powers to require landowners to maintain land adjacent to bridleways to ensure that overgrowing vegetation did not cause damage to the bridleway's surface. This had previously been referred to in the Environment Sub Committee's report on the Public Rights of Way Network.
- 4.54 It was suggested that there was a need for regular enforcement to prevent vehicles parking on cycle routes and a need to ensure that cycle routes on wide heavily trafficked routes were appropriately protected. The provision of a white line to segregate the motor traffic from the cycle infrastructure did nothing to prevent vehicles entering the cycle lane. What was needed was a physical separation such as kerbing or bollards. Simple steps such as this would further support and encourage cycling and reduce real concerns all road users have.
- 4.55 Maintenance (including street cleaning) should more systematically include cycle routes, including the Public Rights of Way network [as referred to in the previous report of Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee re Public Rights of Way].

**Recommendation 4:** Cabinet be requested to ensure that design guidance is developed and that this guidance reflects best practice; and ensure that a corporate approach to maintaining the cycling network is adopted.

## 5. Background Information

The Highways Act 1980  
The North Tyneside Cycling Strategy 2010-2014  
The Tyne and Wear Local Transport Plan (LTP3)  
LDD12 'Transport and Highways'  
Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee report "Public Rights of Way"

## **6. Acknowledgements**

- 6.1 The Sub-group would like to place on record its thanks to the following for the information, support and advice they have provided:

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Karen Nelson – North Tyneside Riders

Alan Rowley – RNIB and Resident

Gillian Rowley – RNIB and Resident

Susan Van Seeters – Resident and Cyclist

Graham Grant – Head of Transport Investment, Newcastle City Council

Dawn Phillips – Public Health Promotions Manager

Graeme Clark – Public Rights of Way, Definitive Map and Cycle Network Officer (Capita)

John Cram – Integrated Transport Officer

Andrew Flynn – Integrated Transport Manager

Dave Parkin – Democratic Services Officer

## Summary of Recommendations

1. Cabinet be requested to endorse the addition of a further key objective to the 2030 Vision, relating to new developments; to agree that an updated set of objectives be incorporated into the 2015-19 Cycling Strategy when drafted; and to agree that the appropriate Local Development Document should be amended, as part of its review, to more robustly reflect best practice with respect to cycling.
2. Cabinet be requested to ensure that the 2015-19 strategy includes a clear indication of strategic cycling routes and a clear indication that initiatives will be developed to further support and increase cycling; and to agree that a target be set for increasing cycling in North Tyneside.
3. Cabinet be requested to ensure that a corporate approach (including Public Health, Highways, Planning and Tourism) to the promotion of cycling in North Tyneside is adopted; and agree that an Annual Information Report on cycling should be provided to Cabinet.
4. Cabinet be requested to ensure that design guidance is developed and that this guidance reflects best practice; and ensure that a corporate approach to maintaining the cycling network is adopted.