

Bath & North East Somerset Council			
MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Cabinet		
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	10 th November 2022	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:	
		E	3402
TITLE:	Valley Floor to Claverton Down Cycle Route		
WARD:	All		
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM			
List of attachments to this report: Appendix 1: BANES Citizens Panel Report			

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 At its meeting of the 23rd June 2021 Cabinet considered a report entitled ‘Active Travel Fund Schemes’. In relation to the proposed active travel scheme on North Road, Bath, Cabinet resolved to:

- *Agree that officers should commission a citizens’ jury or other suitable process of deep public engagement, to determine the most appropriate safe, strategic cycle route to improve between the city centre, the University of Bath and the large employment and education sites in the Claverton Down area, which will take place before the end of this financial year.*

1.2 Britain Thinks was commissioned to undertake the citizens’ panel (a type of deliberative engagement designed to elicit views following the provision of related information), the results of which give the most detailed assessment of public views on active travel, and active travel infrastructure within B&NES ever commissioned, and provides important insights for the Claverton Down to Valley Floor cycle route and active travel (walking and cycling) schemes more broadly

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is asked to;

- **Proposal 1: Citizens’ Panel**

- Note the highly valuable and informative work undertaken by the Citizens’ Panel, and thank all participants for their involvement in this pioneering study.

- Adopt the four principles to guide decision making on any new active travel schemes being developed in B&NES.
- **Proposal 2: Claverton Down to Valley Floor Cycle Route**
 - Note the views of the Citizens' Panel in relation to the Claverton Down to Valley Floor Cycle Route.
 - Confirm the preferred course of action for this route from the options presented:
 - Note the recent commencement of the e-scooter expansion to include Widcombe Hill, monitor the progress and assess the effectiveness of this intervention.
 - Revisit all options for traffic reduction on the route from valley floor to Claverton Down, and using the co-design techniques learned through the Liveable Neighbourhoods work and the principles outlined here, work with stakeholders to identify a comprehensive strategy to reduce car use and enable safer active travel options.
 - Recommence the Transport Improvement Programme in the Claverton Down area, previously paused to avoid abortive works.
 - Progress with programme of investment to improve walking and cycling links, following the approach advocated by the citizens' panel

3 THE REPORT

- 3.1 Prior to the commencement of the Citizens' Panel, a Call for Evidence was conducted. 737 responses were received giving views on active travel, and specific active travel schemes.
- 3.2 Following this, an in-depth assessment was undertaken with 27 residents, selected to be representative of the demographic make-up of B&NES, but with a particular emphasis on harder to reach groups to ensure views from this cohort of the community were fully heard and understood.
- 3.3 Over the course of one month, three stages of work were undertaken by the Citizens' Panel:
- Launch event and initial stages,
 - enabling residents to give their spontaneous views on the current context of active travel in their area at an online discussion; and
 - In-depth interviews were undertaken with 'hard -to-reach' residents who find it difficult to take part in research online.
 - Online community platform,
 - where an understanding was sought on how views and priorities might change when further information was shared about options and solutions for active travel links; and
 - 'hard to reach' residents were offered physical information packs reflecting the context of the digital learning platform to enable full participation.
 - Deliberation Sessions,
 - To understand considered views and weigh up different approaches and explore priorities through meetings online; and

- In-depth interviews with panellists who were unable to attend an online group.

Key findings

3.4 The report highlights 5 key findings in terms of attitudes and perspectives on active travel:

- Residents are broadly positive about active travel and its health and environmental benefits in terms of air pollution. People would personally like to walk and cycle more, but find it difficult if they don't feel fit, mobile or safe enough, especially up/down steep local hills.
- Concerns about travelling locally come to mind easily and are usually related to the roads and poor public transport options. While active travel infrastructure is felt to be lacking when prompted, this rarely comes up as a spontaneous concern.
- While residents are also broadly positive about bringing in specific active travel interventions in Bath and North East Somerset, there is a sticking point on the impact on motorists of making space on the road for active travel schemes.
- When potential active travel schemes in the Claverton Down area are discussed, residents raise concerns about the Council being able to encourage someone like them to use active travel up and down such a steep hill. They say the uphill gradient feels too steep for people of 'normal' fitness and going downhill on narrow roads feels unsafe.
- However, there is evidence to suggest that residents do support an active travel route on one road up the hill to make travelling actively feel safer as well as providing e-bikes to make travelling up steep hills feel easier and more achievable for 'normal' people.

Views on Active Travel

3.5 The need to reduce CO₂ emissions was identified most frequently by residents as one of the top three priorities that Bath & North East Somerset Council should be acting upon. When prompted, the role of active transport in reducing CO₂ emissions was accepted and increasing its take-up supported.

3.6 There remain, however, a number of drawbacks associated with active travel that people experience at a personal level, which continue to mean that many residents are not choosing active travel. In particular, residents raised concerns that travelling by active modes takes longer, can be physically difficult, or difficult due to travelling with children/luggage.

3.7 Investing in active travel infrastructure was identified as a way of making active travel more attractive and safer, with cycle parking being the most popular intervention.

3.8 Cycle lanes were, in principle, welcomed and felt to be a valuable intervention, but concerns were raised about the resultant removal of parking, and about the accessibility and safety of those schemes that do not provide a high level of separation from general traffic.

3.9 With particular regard to the Valley Floor to Claverton Down proposals, the Panel considered the challenges of incorporating active travel schemes onto the narrow roads, and steep gradients of hills within B&NES. The Panel concluded that the gradients would be a limiting factor for broad appeal, and indicated that commencing with investment in a flatter area of the city, which would attract more people to start travelling actively, could provide better value for money.

Residents' principles

3.10 The Citizens' Panel developed four principles to guide decision making on any new active travel schemes being developed in B&NES. Schemes should:

- 1) Offer an easy and appealing alternative to short car journeys.
 - That schemes and routes should be demonstrably based on an evidence-based theory of change e.g. there are a large number of short car journeys being made along the route that could feasibly be replaced by cycling/walking journeys.
 - Focusing cycle lanes on flatter areas to successfully encourage people out of their cars and onto a bike (especially thinking about new cyclists who may lack confidence or not be especially fit).
 - Trying to ensure that making the switch doesn't cost people money or cost more than their current mode of transport.
- 2) Have clear and effective safety features (to reassure new cyclists especially).
 - That safety is a key concern, particularly for cyclists, those considering cycling or parents considering cycling for their children, and particularly on narrow and steep roads.
 - Ensuring infrastructure feels safe.
 - Prioritising cyclists and pedestrians on roads over motorists.
- 3) Be connected and integrated into the wider transport network.
 - Taking a holistic and long-term view on plans for sustainable travel in Bath and North East Somerset – improving opportunities for active travel (both cycling and walking) and public transport where most appropriate for that mode of transport.
 - Ensuring active travel infrastructure is connected and integrated to cause least disruption to users e.g. having to dismount your bike.
 - Carefully planning the features and placement of schemes to minimise negative impacts on the wider transport network.
- 4) Be careful not to disadvantage those who can't easily choose active travel.
 - Considering people who find it more difficult, or even impossible, to travel actively at all (e.g., people with mobility issues, people who are less fit) or for certain journeys (e.g., when carrying heavy things, for longer journeys) in the design of active travel schemes.
 - Ensuring those who can't easily choose active travel aren't disadvantaged by active travel schemes being put in e.g. losing parking spaces, significantly increased congestion for motorists or roads that are closed to them.

- 3.11 All future active travel schemes will be assessed against each of these guiding principles during the design stages, to ensure that the most effective schemes are brought forward.

Valley Floor to Claverton Down

- 3.12 A number of options are available for improving facilities for cycling from the Valley Floor to Claverton Down, using the three roads of North Road, Bathwick Hill and Widcombe Hill. The panel heard about the difficulties of agreeing a design for segregated cycle infrastructure elsewhere in B&NES (Upper Bristol Road), and considered the challenges presented by the three routes up Claverton Down in this context. The overall feeling from members of the panel was that actively travelling from the Valley Floor up to the Claverton Down plateau has even more barriers than in other areas of B&NES, and is one of the areas they would be least likely to consider active travel.
- 3.13 In particular, the Panel felt:
- sceptical that enough people would use any active travel infrastructure given the steepness of the hills.
 - the trade off to take away space on the road from motorists for active travel schemes doesn't feel worth it in this specific instance because it is felt there would be so little to gain.
 - The problem is exacerbated by the fact that steep hills mean the wider and segregated lanes are even more needed for safety, while narrow roads mean there is even less space to give up.
- 3.14 The Panel recognised the role of e-bike or e-scooter rental schemes in providing a way forward, encouraging a form of active travel, while providing assistance with the gradients of the hills.
- 3.15 This suggestion is being addressed by B&NES Council with the recent expansion of the e-scooter trial in Bath to include Widcombe Hill to reach the University of Bath.

Conclusion

- 3.16 The route between the valley floor and Claverton Down remains a key strategic connection in an integrated and connected Bath cycle network, and as such was identified in the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). There are a number of employment and education sites at the top of the hill, and as take-up of e-bikes and e-scooters increases, there is likely to be an increasing benefit to providing a safe, segregated (LTN 1/20 compliant) route for cycles, e-bikes and e-scooters to pass up the hill.
- 3.17 However, the hill is very steep and it is clear from the review by the independent Citizens' Panel that there are still relatively few people who feel confident tackling it via active modes (although some indication that this will change with the advent of e-bikes and e-scooters). The three routes available up the hill also have various constraints and none are wide enough to provide a segregated cycle lane the whole route up the hill without removing the road as a through-route for cars in either or both directions.

- 3.18 This report therefore proposes that work on an up-hill segregated cycle lane is paused in the short term, in line with the Citizens' Panel principle that routes in flatter areas should be prioritised in the early stages of rolling out active travel infrastructure around the district, and the funding allocated to this route is re-allocated to the development of alternative routes within the B&NES LCWIP that align with the principles for active travel identified by the Citizens' Panel.
- 3.19 With the resolution to the Citizens' Panel, it is proposed that the Transport Improvement Programme works on Widcombe Hill, Bathwick Hill and North Road which had been paused to prevent any duplicative or abortive work, should now continue to progress to improve the amenity and safety of these routes for pedestrians, e-scooters, and bicycles.
- 3.20 A future project should revisit all options for traffic reduction on the route from the Valley Floor to Claverton Down and, using the co-design techniques learned through the Liveable Neighbourhoods work and the principles outlined here, work with stakeholders to identify a comprehensive strategy to reduce car use and enable safer active travel options on the route.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 Any future schemes are likely to be situated within the extent of the highway and as such falls within the responsibility of B&NES Council.
- 4.2 Planning, listed building and highways consents may be required to deliver the range of projects proposed, and technical pre-planning and design work will be undertaken to understand the full extent of any additional consents required.
- 4.3 Consideration of B&NES duties under the Equality Act 2010 is central to the development of the CRSTS programme of investment. Accessibility and equalities impact assessments will inform the detailed design stage.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 5.1 The Citizens' Panel was funded jointly by the University of Bath and Bath & North East Somerset Council, with University of Bath contributing £15k, and B&NES £25k to the total cost of £40k.
- 5.2 B&NES will continue to review all new funding opportunities from Central Government, and bid for additional funding where we are eligible.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.
- 6.2 Individual schemes will follow appropriate risk management processes to design and deliver high quality transport investment

7 EQUALITIES

- 7.1 The citizens' panel was designed to be representative of the demographic make-up of B&NES, but with a particular emphasis on harder to reach groups to ensure views from this cohort of the community were fully heard and understood.

- 7.2 The Citizens' Panel report highlighted that active travel schemes should not disadvantage those who can't easily choose active travel, such as disabled people. The panel was representative of the B&NES population including people with disabilities and from harder to reach groups.
- 7.3 An equalities impact assessment will be prepared for the chosen strategy for traffic reduction, when this has been selected by Cabinet or Single Member Decision.

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

- 8.1 B&NES Council has declared both a Climate and Ecological Emergency and is looking to provide leadership to enable carbon neutral B&NES by 2030, and to enable greater citizen engagement in its response.
- 8.2 Transport currently accounts for 29% of carbon emissions in the B&NES area. Ensuring the transport network can enable residents to shift to more sustainable modes and that sustainable transport is the first choice of travel in all cases is an essential part of the Journey to Net Zero strategy.
- 8.3 The insights gained through the Citizens' Panel will aid in the development of effective schemes which will encourage our communities to use active travel, thereby contributing to the achievement of our net zero ambitions.
- 8.4 Measures to reduce traffic and encourage active travel between the Bath valley floor and Claverton Down form part of a package of measures to mitigate the climate emergency through the adoption of more sustainable and healthy transport options.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1 The following options are presented, in addition to the construction of active travel routes, for future consideration for reducing traffic between the Valley Floor and Claverton Down:

E-bikes

- 9.2 E-bike hire and private e-bikes could provide a viable solution for many trips. Secure parking and electric charging will be required at the university. Users of private e-bikes are likely to require enclosed shelters with a high level of security, given the relatively high purchase cost. Dedicated cycle infrastructure will be required to ensure safety of riders on this route, as on all other main routes around B&NES

Former Dramway

- 9.3 In the mid-1990s the University of Bath approached the council about installing a funicular on the route of the former dramway, which used to carry stone from Claverton Down to the Kennet & Avon canal. This route involves cycling 3.1km on the Kennet & Avon canal, a 700m funicular (crossing the A36 at Dry Arch) and a 750m cycle shared use path to the university along the alignment of an existing footpath, as shown in Figure 1. The route is considerably longer than the 2km route via Bathwick Hill.



Figure 1: Use of former stone mines driveway, via Kennet and Avon Canal towpath (in yellow) with existing public rights of way shown in purple.

Direct Park & Ride services

- 9.4 A direct Park and Ride (P&R) service from Lansdown and Odd Down P&R could reduce car trips to the University of Bath site.
- 9.5 It is highly unlikely that a dedicated service (such as the Odd Down P&R to Royal United Hospital) would be viable without considerable financial support, and this is in the context of the bus industry locally and nationally currently being in significant disarray, with a lack of drivers leading to substantial service cuts across the district, and very significant increases in the price of the contract recently renegotiated to simply extend the existing P&R contract to the city centre. However, it may in future be possible to combine the Lansdown P&R service as a through service to the university, with either all services or every other service operating directly between Lansdown-city centre-University of Bath; and to run a dedicated service from Odd Down P&R to the University.

10 CONSULTATION

- 10.1 A Citizens' Panel was commissioned to consider the general context of cycling provision between Bath valley floor and Claverton Down. A report in the form of a PowerPoint presentation was issued in July 2022.
- 10.2 The development and design of all active travel schemes will be developed following consultation with residents, businesses and the general public, incorporating learning from the Liveable Neighbourhoods programme.

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Background papers	None
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	