



Growth & Regeneration Scrutiny Panel 15 January 2024

Questions from Cycle Kirklees (The Kirklees Cycling Campaign) Responses from Kirklees Council

Major Projects (2 questions)

- 1. Primrose Lane, Liversedge: Tranche 2 of the Emergency Active Travel Fund (now ATF) had a requirement for schemes to have begun delivery by March 2021. Why are we still waiting three years later for design capacity whilst the Primrose Lane active travel route is in the worst condition of all the highway network?**

The project has taken some time to develop due to resolving surface specification issues with stakeholders together with land and access constraints. Detailed design is now complete, and we are now firming up costs to ensure affordability due to extraordinary cost inflation over the last 2 years.

Much of the proposed works affect unregistered land and there is also a third-party retaining wall, also unregistered, that may be at risk of collapse during reconstruction of the path. The Council is working through how best to approach these matters, which need to be resolved before works can commence.

- 2. Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU): recognising that closure of greenways for periods of over 4 years in some cases is a requirement of the TRU, why is there low priority given to planned diversions, advance warning of closures through signage? Why is there no public information programme for walkers and cyclists (e.g. using a dedicated web site like *Walk Wheel Ride Kirklees*)?**

Network Rail provide advance notice of all affected temporary and permanent road/PROW closures to the Council. The Council uses this information and publishes the closures on publicly accessible One.Network website.

Due to the scale of the project and the interdependency of the programme with the train operators, amendments to programme are often provided at short notice and as a result, changes to closure periods may have to be facilitated quickly. Any amendments to closures (based on TRU's programme of works) will be updated by the Council on the OneNetwork system as soon as it is reasonably possible.

Alongside this, Network Rail notify key stakeholders on any proposed greenway closures through their own communication teams. Network Rail are responsible for planning the diversion routes and associated signage and share proposals with the Council at the highways working group sessions.

It is Network Rail's responsibility to manage the signage and its implementation. The Council however does conduct checks on the signage when we receive any queries or

concerns from members of the public and relay the issues/concerns to the Network Rail teams.

Transport Strategy

- 1. LCWIP: Will the Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) be expanded to a full network rather than just the 5 corridors that were included when discussed 2 years ago? We note there is still no Kirklees network plan for cycling and walking. This was discussed with officers in 2018/9. Can we have a timetable on its availability for consultation?**

LCWIP 2 is a WYCA led process. We understand that WYCA intend to consult on this work along with the LTP4 work that is pending. Several unexpected things have contributed to a delay at WYCA not least of all the loss of their Active Travel policy officer – however we understand a replacement officer will soon be in posts and so movement on this item may progress more quickly thereafter.

- 2. Greenways: Why is there is no reference to the strategic importance of the traffic-free greenways in Kirklees - Birkby Bradley; Calder Valley, Spenn Valley, Ossett and Meltham Greenway?**

Kirklees recognises the importance of its extensive network of traffic free routes and has successfully been awarded funds via the Active Travel Fund to expand this network - the results of which can be seen in the high-quality network recently improved on the Huddersfield Narrow Canal between Huddersfield and Slaithwaite.

Further towpath schemes between Slaithwaite to Marsden, as well as the Huddersfield Broad Canal between Huddersfield and Cooper Bridge, are also in development.

Furthermore, Kirklees have major projects schemes in development for our greenways, including the Spenn Valley Greenway with the Transforming Cities Fund.

Officers have been working closely with Sustrans on network development and bidding opportunities in Kirklees for many years and continue to do so.

We recognise the importance of these corridors not just for transport purposes and connectivity, but for the health and wellbeing of our communities who we know value spending time on them.

- 3. Safety schemes: Brian Deegan, Director of Inspections at Active Travel England has recently met with all highways authorities in England to explain how maintenance funds can be used to build new active travel infrastructure (e.g. CYCLOPS Junctions) yet when we (Cycle Kirklees) respond to safety scheme plans to request improvements for the safety of people on bicycles we are often met (by officers) with the response “This isn't a cycle scheme.” Will active travel be adopted as the first design consideration in all works to support a faster mode shift to active travel as part of the Transport Plan (or prior to its adoption)? This will reduce costs in the long run as recently redesigned junctions will in future need updating to meet safety standards.**

This is a useful discussion point which has a number of parts, including;

- Funding available for active travel to accelerate mode shift towards walking, wheeling, and cycling
- How Active Travel aligns with the Council's priorities
- How the Council spends capital and revenue on active travel
- How we can secure increased investment in this work, and
- How Active Travel outcomes can be embedded in everything we do, where possible

Investing in Active Travel is often a cost effective thing to do that aligns strongly with numerous other strategic priorities such as decarbonisation, regeneration, strong towns and villages and public health.

It is also important to stress that the capital funding the Council attracts for transport improvement projects is often for extremely specific purposes and usually comes with very rigid parameters for spending.

Where Active Travel England can bring additional maintenance (or revenue) funds to local authorities, Kirklees would welcome this. Currently we are unaware of any uplift in revenue funding for active mode offers.

It is important to note that as an agenda item active travel, whilst undoubtedly important, is not the only council agenda. Though it is clear the contribution active travel has when mainstreamed into corporate business.

Typically, highways maintenance spending has not been of a scale which has allowed Kirklees (or any council) to spend on anything other than essential repairs, rather than transformative works. And often this funding does not stretch far enough to cover even the essentials. When you consider the huge highway and rights of way networks, Kirklees are often overspent in this area. The scale of the challenge is not to be underestimated and statutory obligations must be met to keep the public safe.

However, in a more positive vein, we are working closely with Active Travel England, carefully navigating Active Travel Fund bidding rounds and through the constructive design review processes. Understandably, this Active Travel England input is currently limited, specifically to review projects for which Kirklees has already been awarded. Officers are making every effort to secure the maximum scale of investment possible in Kirklees, and this has enabled Kirklees to successfully attract multiple grant awards in the past 3 years.

As Active Travel England capacity grows to support local authorities, Kirklees will work with them more widely. This might be to get their closer input on planning at pre-application stage for example – with the hope of attracting private investment, or on speculative pipeline work to prepare for future highways improvement. We look forward to their input wherever possible and as they grow to full capacity.

One of Active Travel England's early aspirations was to try and encourage that DfT provide funding at a scale that is necessary to create active environments for all, and to meet the targets set out in the national Gear Change policy. Indeed, the recent Sport England 'Active Design' video sets out the aspiration of ATE to anyone interested in this area of work. [Active Design | Sport England](#) .

Kirklees are also trying to work with Active Travel England and DfT as best we can to ensure that the funding available, and indeed the bidding processes, are suitable not just for our densely populated urban spaces but also that it caters for our disparate and rural communities. We will continue to work with them to stress the importance of funding that meets the needs of our communities.

