

**EXETER CITY COUNCIL****SCRUTINY COMMITTEE -ECONOMY****06 MARCH 2008****SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT INITIATIVES: PROGRESS UPDATE ON WALKING, CYCLING AND THE TRAVELSMART PROGRAMME****1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To update Economy Scrutiny on recent progress and developments in relation to a) walking (and in particular the Green Circle); b) Cycling and Cycling Demonstration Town status and c) the TravelSmart Individualised Travel Marketing Programme for Exeter and neighbouring Exminster.

**2 BACKGROUND****2.1 Exeter Walking Project and Green Circle**

An Exeter Walking Project was established in 2001, with the aim of increasing walking as a mode of transport and as a leisure activity in Exeter. The Project is co-ordinated by Peter Grainger, an employee of Sustrans, the Sustainable Transport Charity. The City Council and Devon County Council have supported this project over several years. National Lottery funding was also provided in the first three years. The City Council also partly funds the salary of the project co-ordinator.

- 2.2 The 2004 opening of the 12-mile walking route known as the 'Green Circle' represented a significant achievement. A free 'interpretative' leaflet pack was published to accompany walkers on this route. This breaks down the 12 mile route into 5 individual walks. An access audit of the route in 2005, conducted by the disability organisation, 'Living Options' has informed improvements to the Green Circle route since that date.

- 2.3 Members last received a report on the Walking Project in March 2007. This report set out a high-level strategy for city council investment in walking initiatives for the period through to April 2010. In addition to summarising recent achievements and performance, the current paper outlines specific plans for city council expenditure on walking in 2008/09.

**2.4 Cycle Exeter: Cycling Demonstration Town Project update**

Exeter was designated a cycling demonstration town (CDT) project by Cycling England in Autumn 2005. Selection as a demonstration town has released a £1.5m contribution over 3 years from Cycling England (the government body monitoring the implementation of this scheme). The City and County Council have committed to also investing a combined total of £1.5m over the same timescale as part of the project (developer contributions have also been received). City Council funding has been used to secure the opening in Spring 2007 of the National Cycle Network shared use path from Bridge Road to Turf Lock. As well as an important strand in the County Council's congestion plan for Exeter, activities to promote cycling contribute to:

- Achieving City Council sustainable tourism ambitions for the City
- Improving the health and well-being of our residents

- Climate Change objectives as set out in the recent Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan for Exeter

2.5 In summary, the CDT strategy for Exeter is to:

- Work with schools, employers and other organisations to implement travel plans that prioritise cycling;
- Undertake infrastructure works to deliver new cycle routes and connect missing links to help achieve a modal shift in favour of cycling and contribute to the congestion strategy for Exeter.

2.6 Members last received a progress update on CDT at the September 2006 meeting. This latest paper summarises key achievements to date. A final evaluation report will be produced in due course to capture overall impact, drawing on analysis of school and workplace travel surveys, automatic and manual cycle counts and other sources.

### 2.7 Travelsmart Programme

Meanwhile, sustainable transport measures in Exeter received an important boost when it was announced in 2007 that a consortium, led by Sustrans and partners Socialdata, had won significant funding from the Big Lottery Fund for a programme which includes Individualised Travel Marketing (ITM) in the City (and neighbouring Exminster). Targeting 25,000 households this programme will deliver door-to-door, tailored, travel advice to those who request it. The aim is to reduce car use and increase the take-up of sustainable alternatives. Evaluation evidence from elsewhere in the country suggests that the approach is effective with a 9% – 14% reduction in car use among the targeted population. This is achieved by giving people the information they need to make simple and modest changes to daily travel choices. Total funding of around £800,000 has been allocated for this project in Exeter (including £195,000 cash funding from the County Council and £15,000 from the City Council).

## 3 **WALKING AND THE GREEN CIRCLE: RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS AND FUTURE PROPOSALS**

3.1 Key recent achievements and performance in relation to the walking project, and the Green Circle in particular, are summarised below:

- Installation of 10 wooden benches along the Green Circle route. A £4000 grant from the Environment Agency was also used to design and construct seats on Duckes Marsh Playing Field in the Riverside Valley Park (installed in Spring 2007).
- As part of the long-term plan to establish a circular walk around Exwick (the ‘Exwick Loop’, see below) - which links into the Green Circle at Exwick Cemetery - the Walking Project contributed £10,000 (2007/08) to the creation of a path from Exwick Lane and St Peter’s Mount across Luggs Farm. The final 60m stretch of this path from St Peter’s Mount will be surfaced shortly, with a short flight of steps added (improving the currently rather muddy stretch).
- Surface improvements have been made beside St James’ mill leat (nr Crematorium); a new path across green space from Ludwell Lane to Woodwater Lane was finished in early 2007; improved crossing arrangements for Pennsylvania Rd and Prince of Wales Rd have been introduced; and new steps and a handrail together with a step-free ‘bypass’ from Belvidere Rd to Exeter University grounds have been inserted.

- The vegetation maintenance regime on the Green Circle has been strengthened, especially in more rural locations. Directional signage en-route is checked twice yearly by a combination of Sustrans and City Council officers (rigid plastic green circle signs have proved less durable than vinyl stickers – the former are gradually being replaced by the latter).
- An automatic pedestrian counter was installed in April 2006 on the Green Circle route (Alphin Brook Walk near Balls Farm Rd). Data from this source shows a modest 2% year-on-year increase between 2006 and 2007 in volumes for the 6month period from April to September.
- Wavelength Resident Panel Survey number 15 shows that 85% of respondents who said that they had walked all or part of the Green Circle were satisfied or very satisfied that paths were free from obstacles along the route, while 80% said that they were satisfied or very satisfied with signposting and way-marking along the route.
- Comparing Wavelength Resident Panel Survey Number 10 (April 2005) with Wavelength Survey Number 15 (June 2007) shows that levels of awareness of the Green Circle has remained reasonably constant. However, the proportion of Panel members who report that they have walked all or part of the route increased from 39% in 2005 to 59% in 2007.
- A revised second edition of the Green Circle Leaflet Information Pack was produced in early 2007. It includes route improvements and an extra insert showing the whole green circle and access information (e.g. the nature of terrain etc). 20,000 packs have been printed and a distribution database has been established with multiple copies distributed to over 60 organisations in the Exeter area during Summer 2007, for onward circulation within the community (recipients include health bodies, educational establishments, leisure facilities and other information points).
- The Green Circle received regional TV (ITV Westcountry News) and Local Radio Coverage in 2007 – an opportunity to raise awareness of the Green Circle.
- The Green Circle continues to be used for health-related initiatives and programmes. Devon PCT co-ordinates walks as part of its ‘Stepping Out’ project and regularly uses parts of the Green Circle for this purpose. Similarly, the British Heart Foundation has used the Green Circle for its annual Great West Walk since 2005, with around 200-300 participants each year.
- Outside the Green Circle, the City Council Walking Project is contributing £18,000 in 2007/08 to a shared use lit pathway from Willow Way (off Summerway) across the field to Pinhoe Rd (exiting adjacent to the Whipton Surgery). This route is designed to improve accessibility (including to the Doctor’s Surgery) and to provide a link to the multi-use games area proposed. Match funding will be provided by the County Council. Local Ward members are being consulted on this proposal.

### 3.2 Forward Programme for 2008/09 (Budget of £45,000)

The forward programme for City Council Walking Project expenditure includes:

- Further work to realise the longer-term aim of establishing a circular 3 mile walk around Exwick (the ‘Exwick Loop’). Key elements for 2008/09:
  - A link path from Exwick Cemetery Field to and across the grass areas beside Chelmsford Road (initial cost estimate: £10,000)
  - Across fields north of Farm Hill [initial cost estimate: £20,000 and likely to focus on western end (Whitycombe Way – Garland Close) and eastern end from Hamlyns Lane]

- Ongoing work to clarify ownership and negotiate access on the middle section of the proposed route north of Farm Hill. Early discussions with the landowner have not so far proved fruitful.
- A contribution to work led by the County Council designed to improve Sir Alex Walk (Footpath 20) from Countess Wear to Topsham. The City Council will provide funding to improve the Tumbling Hills part of this walk (from Glasshouse Lane). County Council work on improving the surface through the reed-bed stretch was completed in 2007.

The design and printing of a comprehensive walking map for all of Exeter which identifies routes and other supporting information. The map will provide an important supplement to the programme of tailored travel marketing under Travelsmart (see below). The cost of this map will be shared 50:50 with the County Council.

## 4 CYCLING AND CDT: RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS

### 4.1 Recent performance data for 'Cycle Exeter' shows:

- An 11% increase in cycle trips during 2006/07, with a 25% increase on the 2005 baseline year (using automatic cycle counter measures located across the city)
- There is evidence of a significant increase in the number of young people cycling to Isca, St Luke's and St Peter's schools since the start of the CDT programme. For example, data suggests that the proportion of pupils cycling to Isca School was as high as 17-18% during the early Summer and early Autumn. Cycling rates are, however, lower at West Exe School and at St James (the latter is around 2-4% of pupils). Efforts will continue through infrastructure 'routes to schools' measures and the work of the Sustrans 'Bike It' (Schools) Officer to improve on these figures. Bike It Officer work with West Exe and St James schools started in earnest during the recent autumn term.

### 4.2 In terms of delivery, the focus over the last 12 months has been on a combination of infrastructure improvements designed to remove the missing links in cycle routes to schools and workplaces, combined with 'soft' measures to encourage take-up of cycling. Key infrastructure schemes either completed or on course for completion in 2007/08 include:

- 140 cycle-parking spaces at Exeter College and ongoing work to provide additional parking at Exeter University, RD&E Hospital, three schools and six workplaces
- A new link constructed from Exwick Playing Fields to the Exe Cycle routes.
- Cycle lighting from Countess Wear to Piazza Terracina on the Quay
- A contra flow cycle lane on Princes Charles Rd to link to St James School
- A new cycle route from Loram Way to Matford Park Rd, creating a link from Alphington into the Marsh Barton Estate
- A new link on Topsham Road to St Leonards School
- The new Willow Way/Summerway – Pinhoe Road shared use path, referenced above
- Resurfacing of Rydon Lane eastern side and upgrading of junctions, designed to be of benefit to users of Sowton Industrial Estate and Rydon Lane Business Park
- Lighting of path to Isca College rear access.

Key soft measures include:

- Cycle Exeter participation in University and College ‘fresher fairs’
  - Employer roadshows designed to raise awareness of cycling opportunities
  - Sustrans Bike It schools programme, involving 10 schools in 2007/08 (referenced above)
  - Extensive Programme of events linked to Bike Week
  - Cycle training: 1200 children and young people have received training and an extended programme of adult cycle training has been conducted
- 4.3 The detailed programme for 2008/09 is currently being prepared but will continue with work on missing links to schools and workplaces (including the key employment sites at Marsh Barton and Sowton). There will need to be a particular focus on improving ‘cycle to school’ rates. A review of accident data in which accident clusters will be identified is expected to be undertaken, with appropriate action instigated. Work at Junction 30 (M5) will also be progressed to establish a more effective link to Clyst St Mary and beyond to Westpoint.
- 4.4. Cycle Exeter and Walking Project activities in 2008/09 will of course helpfully coincide with the TravelSmart programme, described in more detail below. Meanwhile, the Department for Transport has recently announced additional funding for ‘Cycling England’ and the extension of the Cycling Demonstration Town approach to other areas, in the light of evidence of their success to date. Of particular relevance to Exeter are provisional plans to also extend funding for current cycling demonstration towns for a further three years – confirmation and details are awaited from Cycling England.

## **5 TRAVELSMART PROGRAMME: RESEARCH AND DELIVERY PLANS**

- 5.1. An initial postal survey of a random sample of households in Exeter has recently been undertaken by ‘Socialdata’ on behalf of Sustrans. This is to provide a baseline position from which the impact of the TravelSmart Individualised Travel Marketing Programme can be assessed. Survey work will be supplemented with a number of research interviews with individual households. This programme of preliminary research will give a clear picture of current (‘pre-intervention’) travel behaviour in Exeter and Exminster. A second follow-up survey is scheduled for Spring 2010, which when compared with the baseline study, will allow Socialdata to measure the impact of the TravelSmart programme.
- 5.2. Actual programme delivery will start in late April 2008. The programme will be rolled out in three geographical phases. The first phase will focus on areas west of the River Exe and Exminster and will run until late July 2008. Two further phases (South East Exeter and Topsham, Autumn 2008 and North East Exeter, Spring 2009) will be conducted. The focus will be on those parts of the city with relatively high car ownership and relatively good sustainable and public transport opportunities. Field staff will be appointed by the Sustrans Project Team who will provide door-to-door and individualised travel advice to households who request it following initial engagement. County and City Council officers, Stagecoach and FGW staff will ensure that the Project team are furnished with accurate and comprehensive travel marketing material to support engagement with residents.

- 5.3. The TravelSmart team at Sustrans are also keen to pilot a City Council idea, outlined in the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan for Exeter, to combine individual travel advice with advice on energy efficiency to those people who express an interest. TravelSmart officers will refer householders wanting to receive energy advice to colleagues at the Devon Energy Efficiency Advice Centre, who will, in turn, contact householders direct. The Energy Savings Trust will also be invited to offer (modest) funding to help support this integrated approach. This is new and innovative territory for TravelSmart – the lessons learnt from it may well be significant in terms of the future delivery of this national initiative.

## **6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1. Capital funding of £30,000 pa for 2008/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11 for the Walking Project was approved by Council on 19 February 2008. Additional capital funding of £30,000 for 2008/09 for surface improvement work on the NCN Exe Estuary shared-use path was also agreed. The City Council has also agreed to commit a total of £15,000 from transport revenue reserves to contribute to the TravelSmart Programme.

## **7 CONCLUSIONS**

- 7.1 Significant progress is being made in relation to sustainable transport with serious efforts to expand and promote more sustainable modes. These measures should, however, be seen within a much wider context of investment in transport in and around the Exeter area (for example, £16.5m is allocated in the DCC Local Transport Plan for the period 2006-2011).

## **8 RECOMMENDED that**

- 8.1 Members note the contents of this update and offer their continued support of these initiatives designed to encourage more sustainable travel.

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**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)**

**Background papers used in compiling the report:**

National Performance Indicator Results - December 2007