

Meeting of the Active Travel and Accessibility Forum

Zoom meeting 16.3.21

Chair: Cllr Joanna Wright (JW);

BANES officers: Chris Major (CM); Mark Minkley (MM); Alison Sherwin (AS); Kim Moubray (KM); Louise Murphy (LM); Justin Reeve (JR); Neil Terry (NT); Sarah Heathcote (SH)

Delegates: Adam Reynolds (AR) Walk Ride Bath; Alasdair Barron (AB) Bathwick Estates Residents Association; Frank Tompson (FT) Two Tunnels Group; Saskia Heijltjes (SH) University of Bath; Mary Young (MY) Ramblers Association; John Taylor (JT) Walk Ride Bath; Stephen Little (SL) Bath Bus Users Group; Richard Luetchford (RL) Beech Avenue Residents Association; Lynda Lloyd (LL) Bath Access Group; Cllr Manda Rigby (MR); Cllr Sue Craig (SC)

- **Minutes of last meeting**

RL noted that the minutes stated support for the Active Travel Schemes by University of Bath and that this was incorrect.

JW referenced [letter from University](#) which notes that they: “support the principle of the proposed active travel schemes....but do not have a view on the route selected.” This will be added to the previous minutes for clarity.

- **Introduction to the Health Improvement Team (Sarah Heathcote)**

Sarah Heathcote introduced the public health team, and their objective to address health issues in Focus, Protection and Improvement, which includes Active Lifestyles. Aspects they look at are wider determinants of health including the wider environment and healthy places. They are linking to other internal contacts within the Council, such as the sustainable travel team and with external organisations incl WECA. Jenny Wilson was unable to attend but will give a more detailed presentation at the next Forum.

AR: is the activity based around nudge behaviour?

SH: yes, about giving healthy choices and encouraging environmental changes that facilitate healthy lifestyles.

- **City Centre Accessibility Study (Louise Murphy/Steven Maslin)**

The Council introduced emergency measures for social distancing in 2020 in response to Government guidance on the pandemic. Expected that these will be lifted when pandemic addressed, but future permanent restrictions are being considered to improve pedestrian safety. However, issues arise regarding access for blue badge holders to desired destinations and for deliveries to residents etc.

Steve Maslin has been appointed as an independent consultant to look at accessibility in Bath city centre. This includes a technical appraisal and feedback review. Has carried out stakeholder engagement, including virtual panel interviews with different perspectives, including workers and visitors to the city. Has developed an interim report with recommendations.

Concerns regarding people's ability to access facilities and remain independent. Possible mitigations were discussed. Next steps will be to review feedback from the public consultation on City Centre Security and produce a formal report.

JW – Different types of TRO are used depending on circumstance.

LL – Can TRO types be clarified? How will public be made aware of TRO consultations?

SM- Anti-terrorism TROs have a wider scope but still subject to same requirements for consultation as a normal TRO.

CM- Statutory process for consultation will be followed, includes press release, advertising and on street notices. Recognise that this needs higher profile, will investigate if practical to contact previous respondents on the current consultation.

FT- Have improvements to Seven Dials been assessed as part of this?

SM- Not an urban design exercise, but notes that there are issues arising at Seven Dials.

MM- Seven Dials may be looked at following the outcome of the City centre Security proposals. Aware of issues around pavement parking generally, is this picked up in the study?

CM- Government consulted on stronger powers to address pavement parking, BANES supports this fully.

SC- A Liveable Neighbourhoods request has been submitted for the Seven Dials area.

LM- Notes that many respondents had referenced a 'proportionate' approach and that footfall is being considered.

LL- Topical issue with security for women in the city centre; mobility impaired females are particularly disadvantaged and a car is a safe space for them.

- **Bath River Line (Kim Moubray/Finlay McNab)**

A consultation is taking place asking what people want from this space. This is not presenting a design, but feeding into a future design going forward. Previous feedback has been reviewed and virtual focus groups held.

AB- Have you engaged with FOBRA? What is the link to Cleveland Pools/the east section?

FM- Yes, engaging with FOBRA.

MM- Currently looking at west section. Links will be explored in the east section in the future.

MR- Please can you ensure that you speak to Ward Councillors as have good local knowledge.

AR- Can we talk about 'wheeled users' not 'cyclists' as wheelchair users etc have the same requirements for route design as a cyclist but less divisive term.

LM- Disabled needs have to be addressed separately.

- **Chew Valley Recreational Trail (Alison Sherwin)**

This project will provide a well-constructed all-weather off-road shared trail for cyclists and walkers between Woodford Lodge and near Hollowbrook Lane around Chew Valley Lake with the long term ambition to provide an off road route around the entire lake.

Whilst providing greater access to natural green space, benefitting residents and tourists, it will protect the landscape character, habitat and wildlife, that has national and international designation status.

The Council have worked in partnership with Bristol Water, West of England Rural Network (WERN), AONB and Sustrans.

The Council have been awarded £506,685 from the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) and £1,005,800 from WECA Green Infrastructure fund both with conditions. The conditions include land agreement with 3rd party landowner being in place, Planning Conditions satisfied and RPA completion deadline currently September 2021.

The current situation is that the land agreement is still to be finalised and the Council are discussing an extension to the completion date with the RPA. It is currently uncertain whether or not the Council can go ahead with the project until the above have been finalised.

AR- What is the land ownership issue?

AS- Land issue isn't with Bristol Water, they are supporting.

MM- Funding from WECA green infrastructure fund. Notes the wider catchment and prospect of connecting this route to Keynsham and other locations.

- **Staff Training Healthy Streets Foundation course (Neil Terry)**

The Healthy Streets approach is a framework for decision making in relation to planning transport and streets. The framework is based on 10 Healthy Street indicators. These are essential ingredients for tackling public health, socio-economic and environmental challenges that can be addressed through how our streets are designed and managed.

FT- Is addressing speeding part of Healthy Streets?

NT- Not directly, but if principles of Healthy Streets are properly embedded in the design then this will influence driver behaviour.

AB- Is tree planting considered part of Healthy Streets design?

NT- It forms one of the ten indicators of a Healthy Street, and would be considered in future designs.

CM- Parks team are very keen to see inclusion of more trees in urban spaces.

MM- A tree and woodland strategy is also being looked at by WECA.

JW- Recommend if people are interested to look at Healthy Streets online:

<https://healthystreets.com/home/about/>

- **AOB**

RL- Active travel and walking.

As the walking representative for some of those who live in Claverton Down, considers that focus on cycling for Active Travel Schemes is wrong. Insufficient numbers of cyclists justify proposals and investment should be made in walking routes (complete statement provided at end of notes below*).

CM- Safety is a key consideration regarding uptake of cycling. Good quality routes and infrastructure will encourage more use of cycling, so current levels not best indicator of potential.

LL- Why is funding such a significant driver behind pressure to deliver schemes?

JW- Conditions of DfT funding sets the deadlines and parameters; the Council has to meet these else the funding will be withdrawn and schemes cannot be delivered.

Active Travel Fund schemes deadline for comment is 21st March.

FT- ATAF Communications between 3 monthly meetings

Insufficient opportunity in the meetings for members to put forward their own ideas. How can the process between meetings be improved so that dialogue can be ongoing and not just quarterly?

CM- There's a resource implication; currently aware that this is insufficient and action is being taken going forward. In the interim, comments can be sent directly to CM and he will distribute to teams responsible accordingly.

FT- Forum members have good experience and ideas and these need to be fed into council schemes.

MM- Perhaps opportunity for some of the online engagement tools that have been utilised recently to do things differently in the future.

JT- Future Safe Routes to School

Good habits start with children, more consideration should be given to enabling children to cycle to school safely, this seems to have been lost in the current issues.

JW- Laws around school streets is changing, which is positive news.

CM- New law expected Oct 21; funding has been identified in next financial year to advantage and invest in school streets. Liveable Neighbourhoods will also have benefits in terms of access to schools.

LL- These problems have been significantly created by increased school choice which means pupils often not local to school.

RL- Also local schools can be oversubscribed and pupils cannot get a place if they want one, requires travelling further.

JW- Also consider that many schools in Bath are private, so catchment is irrelevant in those circumstances.

Final Comments:

AR- Notes that the Council is doing very good work presently.

SL- Can issues with tree roots on the Bristol to Bath cycle path be addressed. Also, will buses carry bicycles in future? JW talking to WECA about BBRP maintenance. The Bus Back Better national bus strategy for England does promote bikes on buses

JW- Notes that the CAZ is now in operation, the first city outside of London to introduce. Thanks to Chris Major for leading on delivery of very significant project, which has additionally resulted in a substantial grant for ecargo bikes.

AB- (post meeting comment – follow up to earlier point) Where appropriate, replanting of trees could make a big difference to neighbourhoods, for many good reasons. The experience of the Bathwick Estate - - with a recently completed 52 tree replanting project - might be helpful, and is available on their website at <https://www.bathwickestateresidentsassociation.org/street-trees.html>

*Full statement from Richard Luetchford, Beech Avenue Residents Association

“I live in Claverton Down and represent the walking interests of some of those who live here. With the University campus right next door I can understand why the Council chose this area for inclusion in its active travel schemes.

What I can't understand is why the Council's plans focus almost exclusively on cycling.

We see a great deal of Active Travel up here already. It's nearly all walking not cycling. So the proposals don't address the reality of Active Travel in this area.

During term time weekdays I see large numbers of students and staff walking up Widcombe Hill and Bathwick Hill to the campus. That's despite the poor state of the pavements and pathways they have to use. Unsurprisingly, comparatively few cycle. And even fewer, no more than about 40 per day, cycle up North Road. Most don't live in that general direction.

I'm sure this Forum and the Council have a genuine interest in increasing participation in Active Travel. So why waste time and precious Government funding on installing ineffective cycling routes that won't achieve this? Wouldn't using the funds to improve the walking routes on Widcombe Hill and Bathwick Hill yield far better results? And improved health benefits for the many not the few?”