



St. Helens Council

Environment, Regeneration, Housing, Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Review of Pedal Power

June 2013

Task Group

**Councillor(s) – Stephen Glover (Chair), Alan Cunliffe, Allan Jones,
Jimmy Jackson and Sheila Seddon**

**Officers – Daniel Caffrey – Principal Transport Officer (Policy) and Ed
Holden – Sustainable Transport Assistant.**

Purpose

- 1.1 To inform members of the Panel of findings relating to the scrutiny review of Pedal Power.

2. Background

- 2.1 In July 2012, the Scrutiny Commission agreed the annual work programme for the municipal year 12/13 and the initial topic selected for this Panel was a review of Pedal Power, the provision for cyclist and other methods of sustainable transport within the borough.
- 2.2 A task group was subsequently appointed which consisted of Councillors Stephen Glover (Chair), Alan Cunliffe, Allan Jones, Jimmy Jackson and Sheila Seddon. Daniel Caffrey – Principal Transport Officer (Policy) and Ed Holden – Sustainable Transport Assistant were enlisted to assist with the review.
- 2.3 Sustainable Transport is a key part of both local and national transport policy. The Third Local Transport Plan for Merseyside has development of a sustainable transport network as a central policy and has a target of 10% increase in cycling between 2011-2014. Nationally the current Government white paper on Transport 'Creating Growth, Cutting Carbon – Making Sustainable Transport Happen Now' January 2011 sets out the national policy for transport and sustainability transport network being at the centre of this. Going forward nationally there is cross party consensus on the important roll active travel, in particularly cycling will play in being part of the transport offer. Recently to the end Prime Minister David Cameron MP has said he sees cycling accounting for 10% of all trips nationally by 2020. As part of the current spending review for 2015-19 Department for Transport, working in partnership with Department for Health is pushing for upward of £1bn nationally per annum for active travel recognising the benefits it brings.
- 2.4 St.Helens has a very above average level of low car ownership. England and Wales average is 25.6% without a car or van, St.Helens average in 2011 was 48.9%.

3. Findings

- 3.1 In January 2011 The Department for Transport announced a £560 million fund to support the equal goals of creating economic growth and cutting carbon through a package of sustainable transport measures, known as The Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF), the funding is split 62.5% revenue and 37.5% capital.
- 3.2 This funding was split into small bids of up to £5 million, which was released in two stages and a major bid up to £50 million. All the LSTF is awarded through a competitive bidding process.
- 3.3 St.Helens was awarded funding through 3 successful bids which will run until the end of March 2015,
 - Part of a Key Component Bid of £4.81 million with the other Merseyside District Councils and Merseytravel (lead authority).

- Part of a major bid of £19.9 million with the other Merseyside District Councils and Merseytravel (lead authority), and
 - St.Helens (lead authority) 'Mid Mersey – Sustainable Cross Boundary Links' small project bid in partnership with Warrington and Halton Councils of £3.21 million.
- 3.4 There is currently no further LSTF funding confirmed post 2015 and as a result if future funding is not found a number of the initiatives being delivered by LSTF will cease. This includes the support from officers delivering LSTF who are funded by the current funding.
- 3.5 The Task and Finish group received an in depth presentation from the transport officers with regards to St.Helens plans for the borough. This explained the funding, projects completed and underway, and the aims and objectives of the LSTF. Cycling should not be an 'add on' to the Transport Plan but part of it and consideration to cycling be considered when planning new road infrastructure and layouts.
- 3.6 There has also been a recent sub group to cover cycling within St.Helens from a health perspective as part of the Councils Health and Well Being strategy. At a Liverpool City Region level, the Active Travel group has been tasked to take forward a detailed infrastructure plan for the region in regards to walking and cycling infrastructure. This builds on the Active Travel Strategy produced to support the Local Transport Plan.
- 3.7 The Transport Policy Team is now working on developing an infrastructure plan for walking and cycling in St.Helens. This will form part of an updated Active Travel Strategy for St.Helens. This work is at an early stage but the evidence gathered by the infrastructure and initiatives funded through LSTF will be reported within this.
- 3.8 Site visits were undertaken to Rainford Linear Park, Sankey Valley Ranger Centre and Sherdley Park. Schemes have also been completed in Haydock to broaden the access routes to cyclists into the Haydock Industrial Estate. There was also an out of Borough site visit to Southport to view their completed cycle routes around the town.
- 3.9 Letters have been sent to all GP surgeries in the Borough to offer free secure cycle parks to encourage patients to cycle to the doctors, however only one surgery took the Council up on their offer.
- 3.10 Rainford Linear Park – The 6km track leads from the industrial estate at one side of the village, which connects with the Rainford by-pass, to Rainford Junction and the train station. Work is not completed, however the Task & Finish group was able to access the site with the contractors. The track, which is covered in a solid surface, will enable a connection from the train station, which serves Liverpool and Wigan through to the industrial estate.



April 2013



July 2013

- 3.11 It will also encourage local and visiting people and families to use the track for leisure purposes, the contractor is donating thousands of plant bulbs for the local school children to plant once the project is complete later this summer. There will also be access for horses to take advantage of the facility.
- 3.12 Sherdley Park – this completed scheme enables links from Thatto Heath to Sutton /Lea Green across the park. Tarmac surface has been laid to enable heavier vehicles to use the path such as the ranger vehicles. The path is clearly signposted and enables school children to use it for travel to and from school. This scheme was funded through a previous successful bid to Sustrans under their Links to School funding.
- 3.13 Sankey Valley Ranger Centre – there is a ‘cycle hub’ located at the ranger centre, this was originally set up using Big Lottery funding to encourage people to use cycles to undertake more exercise as advised by their GP’s. The ‘hub’ currently houses around 12 bikes, which are suitable for both men

and women, cycle maintenance and National Standards Cycle training courses are also operated from here. These operate over four sessions but would benefit from more publicity. LSTF funding is being used to carry on this project.

- 3.14 There are plans for more cycling hubs to be placed throughout the Borough.
- 3.15 Although not visited by the Task and Finish group it was discussed with the transport officers what has been undertaken at Haydock and the industrial estate. Clear routes have been established to enable people to cycle to and from work, and with the assistance of local businesses suitable cycle storage has been provided in convenient locations.
- 3.16 Southport – Southport was awarded Cycle Demonstration Town status in 2008 through successful competitive bidding. The visit started with a presentation from Sefton Council transport officers. The officers said they had originally gone for funding in 2006 but were unsuccessful as it was seen there was not support politically and at a senior management level. When they went for funding again in 2008 they had full local political support and senior management support with the Chief Executive and Cabinet Member both presenting to the funding board. Sefton officers said without this support they would not have been successful in getting the funding. The Cycle Town project has three key themes’
- Tourism and Leisure
 - Regeneration
 - Schools
- 3.17 The road layout in Southport is very different to that of St.Helens and the Task & Finish group understand that not all of what Southport has undertaken is achievable in St.Helens. However, the basic principles remain the same. Cycle routes are planned along secondary road routes to separate them from the main traffic routes, due to the linear road layout in Southport this is achievable.
- 3.18 There is a cycle hire hub based near the main tourism area, where people can hire a bike from £6. There are several routes around the town, which have been established to ensure that all points of the town are connected. They undertook surveys at schools and established that high school girls are least likely to use a bike to get to and from school, following this additional work was undertaken with this group of people.



3.19 Part of the Task and Finish group used the cycles to witness first hand the benefits of cycling. The remaining members of the group met them at pre-determined points on route. It was evident that using a bike to get you from A to B is much faster and efficient than a car, the cyclist were waiting at two of the three points for the car to arrive.

3.20 There are also various other routes that are being established to ensure cross boundary access will be retained with the neighbouring authorities included in the successful bids.

4. Conclusions

4.1 The Task & Finish group are pleased with the plans and projects that are in place in St.Helens that have been funded by the LSTF, but and would like to revisit the projects once they are all completed.

4.2 St.Helens road infrastructure does not lend itself to becoming a complete cycle town like Southport, but the current projects are helping to create routes and retain existing routes to give the residents the opportunity to navigate around the town on cycles. They are also assisting people without access to motor vehicle transport the opportunity to gain employment in otherwise unreachable locations.

4.3 Whilst the projects are of an excellent standard, the task group recognised that the challenge was to promote cycle use amongst all groups of St.Helens residents to ensure that they are fully utilised, which could include offering specialist bikes for people with disabilities and the ageing population.

5. Recommendations

1. That the Panel note the findings of the task group and agree that the review, and that the Panel will monitor the progress of the outcomes of the work.

2. That cycling is considered from the outset in any new road infrastructure and layout and not as an after thought. Including where required a secondary route for cycling installed as part of the scheme.

3. That the Transport Policy Team and Road Safety & Travel Awareness Team continue to promote cycling in St. Helens and ensure that all groups of residents are targeted with promotional work. Including the support at a political and senior officer level in this work.
4. That investigations are undertaken to identify any other relevant grants available to support cycling in St. Helens.
5. Consideration is given to the requirement of specialist cycles at the cycle hubs to ensure all residents could access the service. In particular through the use of the Cycle 'hubs' being installed across the Borough.

Pedal Power

Rec No	Recommendation	Responsible Officer	Agreed Action and Date of Implementation
1	That the Panel note the findings of the task group and agree that the review, and that the Panel will monitor the progress of the outcomes of the work.		
2	That cycling is considered from the outset in any new road infrastructure and layout and not as an after thought. Including where required a secondary route for cycling installed as part of the scheme.		
3	That the Transport Policy Team and Road Safety & Travel Awareness Team continue to promote cycling in St. Helens and ensure that all groups of residents are targeted with promotional work. Including the support at a political and senior officer level in this work.		
4	That investigations are undertaken to identify any other relevant grants available to support cycling in St. Helens.		
5	Consideration is given to the requirement of specialist cycles at the cycle hubs to ensure all residents could access the service. In particular through the use of the Cycle 'hubs' being installed across the Borough.		