

# STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

## ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 31 MARCH 2022

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WALKING AND CYCLING TASK &amp; FINISH GROUP</b>			
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To report the findings of the Walking and Cycling Task and Finish Group and make subsequent recommendations			
<b>Decision(s)</b>	<b>The Committee RESOLVES to:</b>  <b>a. Thank the Task and Finish Group for its work and its recommendations;</b> <b>b. Support the recommendations as set out in Appendix A;</b> <b>c. Request an annual report on progress with walking and cycling schemes.</b>			
<b>Consultation and Feedback</b>	Recommendations are a result of 3 meetings of the Walking and Cycling Task and Finish Group			
<b>Report Author</b>	Simon Maher, Senior Neighbourhood Planning Officer Email: simon.maher@stroud.gov.uk			
<b>Options</b>	The Group considered a range of options around the prioritisation of projects, interventions to unblock constraints and ways of promoting walking and cycling to a wider audience.			
<b>Background Papers</b>	N/A			
<b>Appendices</b>	Appendix A – Recommendations from the Walking and Cycling Task and Finish Group Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment			
<b>Implications (further details at the end of the report)</b>	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	No	No	Yes	Yes

### 1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Walking and Cycling Task & Finish Group met three times between September 2021 and January 2022 with the role to drive delivery on the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) for the District (as issued by Gloucestershire County Council), and to help realise Stroud District Council's wider Active Travel ambitions.
- 1.2 The Terms of Reference of the Group identified 6 functions which were discussed at the meetings. A series of actions was derived from these discussions. The functions and actions are set out in section 2.
- 1.3 The resulting recommendations are shown in Appendix A.

## **2. TERMS OF REFERENCE FUNCTIONS AND ACTIONS**

### **2.1** *Reviewing progress on existing cycling infrastructure projects, and considering and supporting options for budgeted but not yet allocated cycling spend.*

*Developing a prioritised 'pipeline' of cycling and walking schemes and opportunities, aligned with the LCWIPs for the district (and going beyond, where appropriate, for example where a hyper-local scheme is considered a priority but is not included on the local LCWIP)*

- 2.1.1 The Group received reports on progress with the development by the County Council of LCWIP for the District and spending of the District Council's walking and cycling capital budget.
- 2.1.2 The Group put out a request to town and parish councils and known local walking and cycling groups to submit existing and potential future projects to improve the walking and cycling network. This was an information gathering exercise, not a formal request for bids for funding.
- 2.1.3 A total of 37 projects were submitted by Parish and Town Councils, including 16 walking projects, 9 cycling, and 12 covering both walking and cycling.
- 2.1.4 Two prioritisation tools (one for strategic projects and one for local projects) were developed by the Group. Existing known strategic and local projects were assessed using the tools to test the tools and to develop an indicative pipeline of schemes for further consideration.
- 2.1.5 Recommendations included the continued support for the development of LCWIPS, and a streamlined approval process for the distribution of the existing capital budget.

### **2.2** *Discussing and agreeing the nature of interventions and investments required to unblock constraints and accelerate delivery of the pipeline.*

- 2.2.1 The Group discussed the subject at its meeting on 24 November 2021. It was felt that two of the most important physical constraints preventing more use of our walking and cycling routes relate to safety/accessibility (and the perception of safety) and the legibility of our routes (need for waymarking and signposting). Access for all was recognised as an important equality consideration which would need to be reflected when considering all walking and cycling projects. Improving the width and surfacing of routes, providing safe and convenient crossings of busy roads and achieving direct access to shops and public transport interchanges (bus/railway station) were identified as key ingredients for future success. Whilst leisure and commuting needs may differ, there is an important connection between the two – safe and attractive leisure routes will improve confidence and increase the propensity for people to look to walking and cycling for other types of journeys.
- 2.2.2 Technical design guidance published in July 2020 by the Department of Transport for the provision of walking and cycling infrastructure (LTN1/20) lays out design requirements of a much higher standard than some projects have previously proposed. Meeting these standards is important for leveraging future

central government funding. There is therefore a need to produce appropriate feasibility and design studies, and in some cases revisit proposed designs in order to meet these requirements.

- 2.2.3 The group agreed that a key recommendation when considering unblocking constraints was to ensure that the equality considerations arising from walking and cycling projects are taken into account at an early stage in the planning and design process – including consulting with representative groups (e.g. visually impaired users, pedestrians with limited mobility) and addressing access and parking for larger bikes, and the affordability of e-bikes.
- 2.2.4 Other recommendations included gaining momentum through “quick win” schemes, working to unlock land-ownership constraints, and exploring opportunities for match funding.

**2.3** *Identifying ways to promote pipeline priorities to a wider audience (Gloucestershire County Council, Siobhan Baillie MP) to gain necessary support.*

- 2.3.1 The Group discussed the subject at its meetings in November 2021 and January 2022 as well as more general ways of promoting walking and cycling.
- 2.3.2 Recommendations included appointing a cycling mayor, working with health and well-being teams to promote active travel, increased publicity for schemes we are working on, and supporting the provision of initiatives to build confidence for walking and cycling.

**2.4** *Providing a point of contact for community groups to promote local schemes for consideration*

- 2.4.1 The Group included representatives from outside bodies and invited town and parish councils and other known walking and cycling groups to share existing and potential future local schemes for information. It was clear from discussions that there is a particular requirement to consider the walking and cycling needs of hard to reach and disadvantaged groups in future discussions.
- 2.4.2 Recommendations included communicating with town and parish councils to clarify how SDC can provide assistance and funding for local walking and cycling projects, and how future District Council initiatives could provide opportunities for further discussion on the provision of mobility and active travel projects (e.g. through the delivery of the CN2030 Strategy).

**2.5** *Making recommendations to the Environment Committee, where any decisions resulting from any of the above functions are required.*

- 2.5.1 The Group concluded that many of the recommendations can be delivered immediately through the more focussed operation of existing policies and funding streams. However, to achieve a step change in delivery and to raise the profile of walking and cycling within the District will require additional measures, where the support of Environment Committee would be welcomed.

### **3. NEXT STEPS**

- 3.1** A series of recommendations from the Task and Finish Group are set out in Appendix A.
- 3.2** Members of the Group expressed a wish to discuss opportunities to expand walking and cycling budgets for future years through the budget setting process during autumn 2022. An annual report to Environment Committee on progress with walking and cycling schemes is also proposed.
- 3.3** In terms of future working with communities around walking and cycling, the Community Engagement Board set up to deliver the CN2030 Strategy will provide an opportunity to discuss mobility and active travel opportunities within our communities and an officer action group centred on mobility will take these issues forward.

### **4. IMPLICATIONS**

#### **4.1 Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications within the report. Any future changes to the budget must be recommended by Environment Committee to Council for approval. If additional resource is necessary for the project, this will need to be funded and addressed through the budget setting process for 2022-23.

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#### **4.2 Legal Implications**

There are no significant implications within this category.

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#### **4.3 Equality Implications**

An EqlA has been carried out by Officers in relation to the decision made in this report and due regard will be given to any implications identified in it. The group identified the importance of inclusivity and equality in walking and cycling in the early stages, and this is reflected in the subsequent recommendations. The EqlA identifies potential positive impacts for protected groups in the categories of age, disability and sex, as well as groups affected by rural considerations.

#### **4.4 Environmental Implications**

The recommendations of the Group are designed to unlock constraints and drive delivery of walking and cycling schemes in the District. Providing active travel options will encourage a shift away from car use, particularly for short journeys, and thus a reduction in emissions associated with those journeys.