



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Consultations on DRD Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland
Date:	17 th June 2014
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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	In November 2013, the Department for Regional Development set up a Cycling Unit to provide a focus for the Departments work on cycling. It is proposed that the unit will be working 'to ensure that cycling provision is a key element in both transport strategy and delivery and to develop and promote the bicycle as an everyday mode of transport of citizens in Belfast'.
1.2	The unit is developing a 'Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland' and as a first step in this process has prepared an issues paper which highlights the proposed key areas that need to be addressed in order for Northern Ireland to achieve its cycling potential.
1.3	DRD have requested views from stakeholders on the issues paper and has outlined 10 questions to respond to. A summary of the main issues relating to the questions is outlined below.

2	Key Issues
2.1	The establishment of a Cycling Unit in the Department for Regional Development and the development of a Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland are broadly welcomed by the Council. As a general point the committee may wish to seek clarification on the use of the wording 'Bicycle Strategy' rather than 'Cycling Strategy' in the title. It is suggested that the latter is more appropriate.
2.2	The Council published a revised Transport Policy in 2008 and a key policy objective

	outlined in the policy was “to seek to influence the development of transportation policies and proposals which improve connectivity and encourage modal shift away from the private car to more sustainable forms of travel, such as walking, cycling and public transport”.
2.3	The issues paper seeks views on a number of issues:
	Vision
2.4	The vision outlined in the issues paper for the ‘Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland’ is as follows: “to re-establish a cycling culture in Northern Ireland which gives people the freedom and confidence to undertake everyday journeys by bicycle.” It is suggested that the Council would support the principle behind the vision but consider that the wording is amended to state ‘establish’ rather than re- establish as it is felt that a cycling culture was not previously established in Northern Ireland, at least for the current generations.
	Funding
2.5	A key objective of the Council’s Transport Policy is “to seek to ensure a high level of emphasis of capital expenditure on sustainable transportation schemes, ensuring that the priority is allocated to sustainable modes of travel such as walking, cycling and public transport schemes”. It is suggested that in line with the Councils Transport Policy, increased funding would be supported for cycling as the current level of cycling investment in Belfast is estimated to be less than £1 per person per year compared to £10-£20 per person per year in Amsterdam. In order to realise the ‘cycling revolution’ outlined by the DRD Minister in the document, it is considered important to increase funding significantly.
2.6	In relation to specific targeting, it is suggested that in the first instance funds should be available for areas with high population densities such as Belfast where there is the greatest potential for increasing the opportunities for residents to switch modes of travel to cycling for short commuter, school and other journeys.
2.7	The Council is currently developing a Public Bike Share scheme in Belfast city centre as part of the Belfast City Council’s Investment Programme 2012-2015 in partnership with DRD. A primary objective of the scheme is to provide a sustainable low cost transport alternative for the citizens of Belfast and visitors. It is suggested that the strategy should identify supporting measures to realise the full benefits on this high profile Active Travel scheme for the city such as improved cycling infrastructure alongside investment in cycle proficiency training for users.
	Network
2.8	The issues paper suggests a comprehensive network for cycling which will comprise arterial routes, quiet routes and greenways. It is suggested that the Council would support this mixed form of provision to develop a network of routes which provide options for cyclists of various abilities and for commuting as well as leisure.
2.9	It is also suggested that for cycling on main roads and arterial routes segregation would be preferable where traffic volumes are high or speed is high. On the quiet routes it is suggested that a 20mph speed limit is appropriate along with priority for cyclists at junctions. On the greenway routes consideration should be given to the management of difference user requirements from the commuter to leisure cyclist. The issue of user security on greenways routes should also be considered.
2.10	It is suggested that the strategy demonstrates a high level commitment to the quality of a future cycle network. A commitment is needed to ensure that the needs of cyclist

2.11	<p>are taken into account in the design and implementation of all future transport and public realm schemes.</p> <p>DRD have requested views from stakeholders on the issues paper by the 13th June but have stated that a response from Council can submitted after this date to allow consideration by the elected members. The Councils proposed draft response to the issues paper is attached in Appendix 1 for consideration.</p>
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3	Resource Implications
3.1	N/A

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	There are no equality or good relations considerations.

5	Recommendations
5.1	Members are requested to consider the proposed draft response to the DRD Issues paper in Appendix 1 on the 'Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland' and if appropriate endorse this as an agreed response.

6	Decision Tracking

7	Key to Abbreviations
	DRD Department for Regional Development

8	Documents attached
	Appendix 1 Proposed draft response to the DRD issues paper for the Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland.

Issues paper to inform the development of a Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland.

The development of a 'Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland' by Department for Regional Development is broadly welcomed by the Council. The Council published a revised Transport Policy in 2008 and a key objective outlined in the policy was "to seek to influence the development of transportation policies and proposals which improve connectivity and encourage modal shift away from the private car to more sustainable forms of travel, such as walking, cycling and public transport". The Council would seek clarification on the use of the wording 'Bicycle Strategy' rather than what would be considered the more appropriate 'Cycling Strategy'.

Do you share our vision for cycling in Northern Ireland?

The vision outlined in the issues paper for the 'Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland' is identified as "to re-establish a cycling culture in Northern Ireland which gives people the freedom and confidence to undertake everyday journeys by bicycle."

Whilst the Council would support the principle behind the vision it is suggested that the wording is amended to state 'establish' rather than re-establish as it is felt that a cycling culture has not existed in Northern Ireland in recent years. It is considered that the vision should be more future orientated.

What do you think should be included in our vision?

It is suggested that the following enhancements are included in the vision:

- a long term strategy such as 25 years which would set targets on what the strategy will deliver and the related timescales;
- the potential for the strategy to be cross sectoral in nature and form part of a more comprehensive redevelopment focus. It is suggested that the vision should make connections to this potential and aspire to positively influence health, economic and environmental investments;
- inclusion of specific targets or objectives such as 'a majority of journeys under 5 miles to be taken by bicycle'; and
- the inclusion of a form of wording around broader recreational cycling instead of solely concentrating on purposeful journeys.

Do you think that funds available for cycling should be focussed on specific areas in the first instance?

A key objective of the Council's Transport Policy is "to seek to ensure a high level of emphasis of capital expenditure on sustainable transportation schemes, ensuring that the priority is allocated to sustainable modes of travel such as walking, cycling and public transport schemes. The Council would therefore support increased funding for cycling as the current investment in cycling in Belfast is estimated to be less than £1 per person per year compared to £10-£20 per person per year in Amsterdam. In order to realise the 'cycling revolution' as outlined by the DRD Minister in the document, funding will need to increase significantly. It is suggested that in the context of limited resources, DRD should seek investment from partner organisations with similar agendas such as regeneration, health, etc.

In relation to targeting, it is suggested that in the first instance funds should be available for areas with high population densities such as Belfast where there is potential to increase the opportunities for a switch to making short commuter, school and other journeys by bicycle. It is important to build on the success from the last decade as the number of cyclists in Belfast has increased by 60% in the last 10 years and now account for 2.1% of all commuter journeys.

Within Belfast 75% of residents also work within the city boundaries. Belfast is a relatively small city (in distance times) meaning many of the journeys of residents for employment purposes will be within the 5km range, ideal for cycling.

The Council is currently developing a Public Bike Share scheme in Belfast city centre as part of the Belfast City Council's Investment Programme 2012-2015 in partnership with DRD. A primary objective of the scheme is to provide sustainable low cost transport option for the citizens of Belfast and visitors. The strategy should identify supporting measures to realise the full benefits on this high profile Active Travel scheme such as improved cycling infrastructure in Belfast and cycle training.

It is suggested that that the Department considers joint investment with other partner organisations i.e. investment in environmental improvement, major capital developments (within Belfast this could include the relocation of the University of Ulster to York Street, Streets Ahead Phase 3, the transformation of leisure facilities, development of the Girdwood site, etc) to work in partnership to maximise the potential benefits of proposals for improved connectivity and cycling.

How do you think we should prioritise how funds are distributed?

In terms of prioritising how funds are distributed, it is suggested that areas of existing deprivation are targeted. Previous programmes run by the Council in these areas have proved to be very successful in encouraging people to move toward cycling as a mode of transport. The Council would also suggest prioritising funds towards projects aimed at young people to encourage a changing culture and long term use of cycling as a mode of transport

Do you think this is the right approach to developing a bicycle network in Northern Ireland?

The strategy suggests a comprehensive network for the bicycle which will comprise of arterial routes, quiet routes and greenways. It is suggested that the use of a mixed network of routes would provide options for cyclists of various abilities and for commuting as well as leisure.

The Council would support innovative forms of cycling infrastructure provision and the development of segregated cycle routes /junctions similar to match the quality of best practice in Europe. In other areas Authorities are currently trialling innovative cycling infrastructure such as:

- segregation within carriageway, side road crossings and separations methods;
- Dutch style roundabouts;
- Traffic signals for cyclist – high and low level; and
- bus stop by passes.

The impact of significant 'journey generators' on traffic flow and congestion should be considered in developing a network. Density of employment and proximity to employment opportunities provides the opportunity to make significant gains in the number of cyclists, while assisting in solving other negative issues such as congestion, poor air quality, etc.

What kind of routes do you think we should aim to develop in our large urban areas, our towns and our rural areas?

The strategy should set out a commitment to creating safer and more legible routes in the urban areas. Without safe, practical, and continuous routes in urban areas it is unlikely that the increasing levels of cycling can be sustained.

The strategy should demonstrate a high level commitment to the quality of the cycle network. A commitment is needed to ensure that the needs of cyclist are taken into account in the design and implementation of all future transport and public realm schemes.

What do you think should be the characteristics of each type of route?

Provision for cycling on main roads and arterial routes should include segregation where traffic volumes are high or speed is high. On the quiet routes it is suggested that a 20mph speed limit is appropriate with priority for cyclists at junctions. On the greenway routes consideration should be given on how to combine different user requirements, the commuter and leisure cyclists. Security on greenways routes should also be addressed as the routes develop.

In general it is suggested that the following characteristics should be considered for all routes:

- End-to-end routes (i.e. the provision doesn't drop cyclists / pedestrians out into traffic at busy junctions)
- Maximising safety at side roads
- Maximising safety and priority at junctions
- Minimising conflict points with all users
- Connecting the main route to local networks and key attractors
- Integrate with proposals along the corridor
- Relatively direct (i.e. the shortest and most continuous route possible)
- Well lit into the evenings and early mornings
- Wide enough to safely accommodate cyclists (i.e. 2m minimum)
- Reduced clutter and street furniture
- Accessible to local communities (potential for pathways off into residential areas)
- Appropriate surfaces, fully maintained
- Links populations to services, shopping, leisure facilities, schools and public transport
- Clear legible signage
- Include monitoring and traffic counters
- Where required provide opportunities to rest / stop off (i.e. seating or shelter) on longer routes

What do you think are the most important elements of designing for the bicycle?

It is suggested that safety and convenience are paramount in designing cycling infrastructure (promoting cycle priority and designing out conflicts and cycle safety at junctions) and also the provision of secure bicycle parking at appropriate destinations is essential.

Do you have any other ideas about how we can encourage the relationship between all road users, including cyclists and pedestrians, to be of respect and understanding?

The strategy aspiration outlined in the issues paper to encourage greater respect and understanding between all users of the transport network is important. Commitment of resources to ensure cyclist training along with training for other road users, HGV and bus operator/drivers is essential.

Other suggestions include:

- A review of driving test theory and practice, to ensure awareness of cyclists is adequately covered.
- Mass media campaigns (similar to the current 'Respect everyone's journey' campaign)
- Work with regular road users such as public transport and taxi drivers and taxi organisations

Are there any other ways that you think we could support the interchange between modes?

It is suggested that the following initiatives are considered:

- App based or mobile device accessible maps and target short journeys i.e. under 5km. Within Belfast 70% of all journeys less than 5km are taken by motorised transport. There is significant scope to target these journeys.
- Campaign to challenge the perceptions of cycling i.e. in Belfast 60% of residents think the roads are too dangerous and only one in every six cyclists is female. Cycling needs to be viewed as an activity accessible for everyone.
- Incentivise cycling as a form of transport i.e work based or tax incentives for use
- Changing the policy on the number of bicycles allowed on trains and the exploration of potential for bike racks for trains and buses.
- Support partners to deliver year round regular events promoting cycling.
- Undertake short term innovative approaches / ideas to test for viability of projects.

We want to work with employers in a way which is effective and efficient. How do you think we can support employers in encouraging greater numbers of people to cycle to work?

It is suggested that the following initiatives are considered:

- Incentivise employers to promote cycling i.e. external recognition for employers who support their workforce to cycle.
- Inclusion of changing / showering facilities in the design of new office blocks / spaces.
- Support employers with bike parking.
- Increase the availability of bicycles to employers through re-cycle schemes and bike hire schemes.
- Tax or other incentives i.e mileage.

Do you think there are other ways of calming traffic that we should consider in order to benefit cyclists?

It is suggested that the following initiatives are considered:

- Lower traffic speeds by the introduction of 20 mph zones where it could support route development
- Appropriate segregation from pedestrians and motorised vehicles through the use of planters or armadillos.
- Removal of turning boxing which give priority to motorised vehicles.

How do you think we can ensure that new developments make appropriate provision for the bicycle?

It is suggested to influence planning policy and legislation i.e. current planning requires new build housing to include a ratio of car parking spaces to bedrooms. A similar approach could be taken with major housing / office development sites i.e. certain number of metres of cycle paths or certain number of secure bike parking spaces, showering facilities etc. .

Do you think these are the right things to include in our strategy?

It is suggested that the strategy should give consideration to wider policy changes required by partner organisations to support the implementation of a cycling strategy for Northern Ireland.

Have we missed anything which you consider to be of strategic importance to developing cycling in Northern Ireland? If so, please tell us.

- Policy changing / influencing does not appear to be within the remit of the current strategy. In order to ensure long term commitment for cycling in the future, changes to / and the introduction of policy and legislation will be required.
- Influencing how roads and footpaths are built and the standards to which they are delivered. The Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan makes reference to use of the

GOMMMS appraisal framework for road design, which supports multi modal forms of transport, however such standards are not always consistently considered for road developments.

- The strategy should make reference to how it will be financed and set targets on what the strategy will achieve.
- The establishment / aligning of local urban forums could play a significant role in embedding cycling in the future proofing of our cities, towns and villages.
- Need to include recreational cycling as well as cycling for purposeful journeys

Additional comments regarding health:

- **The new approach model-** page 3 – there is no reference to **employability** or **social economy** i.e. skilling up individuals to succeed with this ‘revolution’ in bike care or as a result of any construction work linked to the new plans/lanes
- Also linked to **employability** ensuring social clauses are within future plans for local individuals to benefit from the changes
- **Health Improvement** – page 4 – there is a need to reference **mental health** as well as a fitter healthier society, with lower levels of obesity and fewer sick days as it has been proven that your surroundings can affect your mental wellbeing.
- **Learning and skills** – page 4 – the need to reference adults as well as children and young people – i.e. across the life span particularly as we are an ageing population and Belfast is a Age Friendly City so it cannot be assumed adults are not willing to learn new skills
- The need to ensure local residents and people who do not cycle are involved in developing the proposals – within inner city, outer city and beyond i.e. **community development approaches** to ensure success and use of the lanes
- **Implementing the plans** (page 8) there will need to be a **strong** behaviour change initiative/campaign targeted for different areas, as areas of deprivation will have different needs/behaviour compared to other areas and most probably be experiencing health inequalities. As per the **social determinants of health**, individual lifestyle factors have an impact on health as do the social conditions in which people live and work.
- **Motivation and confidence** to start cycling needs to be cited somewhere in the strategy as again the assumption that individuals are both confident and motivated to cycle for commuting to work, for leisure etc cannot be made.
- Clarity on what the plans are regarding the **hard to reach areas, community of interest groups** including Black and Minority Ethnic groups, etc?
- Details on the consideration of the **financial implications** for individuals starting cycling taking in to consideration the current poverty agenda, fuel, food, finance, as there are costs associated with cycling –
 - Start up
 - Up keep
 - Safety (locks, helmet etc.)