



Subject:	Draft Belfast Bicycle Network 2017 Consultation Document
Date:	08 March 2017
Reporting Officer:	Donal Durkan, Director of Development
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Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	<u>Draft Belfast Bicycle Network 2017 Consultation Document</u> The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) has prepared a Draft Belfast Bicycle Network Consultation Document which aims to guide the development and operation of the bicycle infrastructure in Belfast for the next 10 years. The Draft Belfast Bicycle Network 2017 is a progression from the Northern Ireland Bicycle Strategy published in 2015 which identified building a comprehensive network for the bicycle as one of its main pillars. Members can access the full consultation document at the following link: https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/consultations/draft-belfast-bicycle-network-2017-consultation
1.2	The suggested response to the Draft Belfast Bicycle Network 2017 Consultation Document is attached in Appendix 1, for consideration.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Consider the proposed response to the Draft Belfast Bicycle Network 2017

	<p>Consultation Document (Appendix 1) and, if appropriate, agree this response for submission to Dfl.</p>
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>The Department for Regional Development (DRD) published the Northern Ireland (N.I) Bicycle Strategy in 2015 with a vision of establishing a cycling culture in Northern Ireland to give people the freedom and confidence to travel by bicycle, and where all road users can safely share space with mutual respect.</p>
3.2	<p>The N.I Bicycle Strategy outlined a three pillar approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Build – a comprehensive network for the bicycle; - Support – people who choose to travel by bicycle; and - Promote – the bicycle as a mode of transport for everyday journeys.
3.3	<p>Under the Build pillar, the Strategy highlighted the importance of developing urban networks as a key element of developing a comprehensive network. The Draft Belfast Bicycle Network represents the public consultation on the first urban network – a bicycle network for Belfast.</p>
3.4	<p>The Council is currently consulting on its first Community Plan – the Belfast Agenda. Relevant to the Bicycle Network Plan, the Belfast Agenda identifies the following outcomes by 2035:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Everyone in Belfast experiences good health and wellbeing; and - Belfast is a vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally friendly city.
3.5	<p>It is proposed that the percentage of all journeys which are made by walking, cycling or public transport and number of miles of cycle lanes, footways and footpaths will help measure progress towards the Belfast Agenda outcomes. In addition within the next 4 years under the “City Development” priority, the Belfast Agenda aims to develop the city’s infrastructure and improve connectivity.</p>
3.6	<p>The Council acknowledges that the development of a Bicycle Network for Belfast will be key to delivering aspects of the Belfast Agenda and to giving those who would like to cycle freedom and confidence to do so. However the Council would highlight that the capital build element is only one element of encouraging an increase in cycling and a series of behavioural change programmes and positively framed public awareness campaigns will</p>

	be required to provide feelings of freedom and confidence.
3.7	The Bicycle Network is intended to guide the development and operation of the bicycle infrastructure in the city for the next ten years. The Council recognises that the timeframe for the delivery of the network will be dependent on the resources available and it is critical that adequate resources are allocated to the implementation of the plan. The Council would welcome a more collaborative working approach on the prioritisation and implementation of the Bicycle Network Plan.
3.8	The Council would highlight the success of the Belfast Bikes scheme and the high demand to expand the scheme outside the city centre which is currently underway in parts of the City. In order to support this scheme, there is an urgent need to improve the overall cycling infrastructure across the City for current and future users.
3.9	It is proposed to develop different types of routes depending on the user needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Level of experience - inexperienced, casual, experienced; and - Trip purpose – utilitarian (cycling for a particular purpose e.g. commute, run an errand) or recreational.
3.10	The Council is supportive of this approach as each route will be different in terms of potential users and mix of travel modes. The use of a mixed network of routes would provide options for cyclists of various abilities and for commuting as well as leisure.
3.11	In addition, different types of infrastructure (cycle tracks, mandatory cycle lanes, contraflow cycle lanes, bus and cycle lanes, shared streets, and traffic calming measures) are identified and it is suggested that the network would consist of a range of these depending on the circumstances at each location. The Council would encourage that consideration be given to ensuring the highest levels of safety (traffic-free cycle routes and protected bike lanes) are appropriately employed along routes i.e. highest level of safety near schools and along routes where motorised traffic may be faster flowing).
3.12	The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) has recently announced a 12 week trial to allow Class A taxis access to bus lanes from Monday 20 th February. The trial will apply to the bus lanes on the East and West Belfast Rapid Transit (BRT) routes and the 12 hour bus lanes in the city centre, which link the two routes. There is concern that the use of the bus lanes by taxis will reduce the level of safety for cyclist and be in contradiction of the aims

	of the N.I Bicycle Strategy.
3.13	<p>Building on the themes outlined in the Bicycle Strategy, the Draft Belfast Bicycle Network identifies the following network requirements in defining the general character of the proposed bicycle network:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coherence; - Directness; - Attractiveness; - Safety; and - Adaptability
3.14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guiding Principles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cycling must be planned for mass transport; - Facilities need to be designed for growing numbers; - Bicycles should be segregated from pedestrians where possible; - Bicycles should have space separated from volume motor traffic; - Quiet and lower-traffic speed streets should be used; - Interventions need not be attempted on every road; - Routes need to flow and take account of how users behave; - Routes need to be intuitively understandable by all users; - Provision needs to be consistent and routes need to be planned as a network; - Capital infrastructure may be necessary; - All designers of cycle schemes should cycle the proposed route; and - Routes need to be maintained.
3.15	<p>The Council considers maintenance of the network to be important to ensure its continual usage and would encourage that the network is regarded as a significant part of the local traffic infrastructure and should be seen as an extension of the road network. In this regard it should be given due priority with relation to maintenance, removal of debris, treatment in winter, etc. The Council would require clarification around potential financial issues relating to both the capital build and ongoing maintenance of the network.</p>
3.16	<p>A Primary Network consisting of 8 arterial/radial routes and 3 orbital routes (Appendix 2) has been identified. A Secondary Network will reach further into communities and provide access to services and other key destinations. The Council supports this approach</p>

	building upon the existing infrastructure across the city.
3.17	The Council considers the omission of a number of the main arterial routes which service high density residential areas from the primary network as a major oversight. In particular, the Lisburn and Ormeau Roads suffer from heavy traffic congestion as highlighted by a recent study and the opportunity to develop high quality cycle infrastructure along these routes to encourage a modal shift is paramount. In addition, the south and north of the city will not benefit from the Phase 1 of Belfast Rapid Transit, therefore priority should be given to promoting other sustainable modes such as walking and cycling routes.
3.18	The Council also proposes that consideration is given to an additional community greenway route to service the south west of the City. The alignment of the route would link the proposed Transport Hub and Belfast City Centre along the busway to the Westlink, Bog Meadows, along the M1 Motorway corridor to connect with the Lagan Towpath and Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park. This route has the potential to link high density residential areas in the west of the city to the Lagan Towpath and the city centre. It would provide a safer environment in which to encourage greater uptake of cycling, improve accessibility, improve health and well being and support greater bio-diversity.
3.19	While the Council welcomes the plan and agrees to it in principle, we would require clarification on the impact on Council land in terms of access, pathways, lighting and gates. The Council would also suggest that discussions take place with the relevant Council officers in relation to the specific proposed routes in relation to design, build and ongoing maintenance. As previously suggested, the Council would welcome a more collaborative working approach on the planning and implementation of the Bicycle Network Plan with the potential to improve elected member engagement through a presentation to committee.
3.20	Members should note that a Strategic Review of the Belfast Bikes Scheme is underway. Part of this review is to look at options for expansion of the scheme to other parts of the city and this will be examined in line with the proposals coming from the DFI in respect of the Belfast Bicycle Network.
3.21	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> None.

3.22	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u> No specific equality or good relations implications.
4.0	Appendices
	Appendix 1 - Response to the Draft Belfast Bicycle Network 2017 Consultation Document Appendix 2 - Proposed Routes