

CLEANER AIR AND SAFER TRANSPORT (CAST) FORUM AGENDA

Date:	Tuesday 31 st March 2026	
Location:	Reading Council Chamber), Civic Offices, Reading Borough Council, Bridge Street, Reading	
Time:	6:30pm - 8pm	
Chaired by:	Councillor Cross	
Attendance:	<p>Cllr Will Cross (Chair) Cllr John Ennis Cllr Jenny McGrother Cllr Meri O’Connell Cllr Adele Barnet-Ward Cllr Andrew Hornsby-Smith Cllr Mohammed Ayub Ross Jarvis (RJ) James Turner (JT)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Non-RBC Attendees Details Redacted</p>	<p>Reading Borough Council (RBC) RBC RBC RBC RBC RBC RBC RBC RBC</p>
Agenda Items:		
No:	Item:	Action:
1.	<p>Introduction and Apologies:</p> <p>Apologies had been received from:</p> <p>Cllr Karen Rowlands - RBC Cllr Sarah Magon - RBC Miriam Fuertes - Transport - RBC</p>	

2.

Air Quality Update

Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Update

The Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) project is a government-funded programme in England that supports local authorities to plan and deliver public electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure, especially on-street charging for residents without off-street parking.

Reading Borough Council was awarded £866,000 from the LEVI fund.

The two key objectives of the LEVI fund are:

1. Delivering a step-change in the scale of deployment of local, primarily low power, on-street charging infrastructure across England.
2. Accelerating the commercialisation of, and investment in, the local charging infrastructure sector

Reading's LEVI fund will be managed through a 15yr concession contract with the successful bidder delivering 2620 standard speeds sockets, with 50% of these delivered in the first 2 years of the contract. Sites will be selected in areas where residents do not have access to off-street parking. The contract is expected to be formalised soon, and the Council will then be able to publish the full details of the successful contractor and the services offered.

The Council has also allocated £100k from the LEVI Fund as well as £102k funding from the Pavement Channel Grant Fund for the installation of cross pavement solutions (up to 400 resident's properties). This will enable residents to use their own electricity connection to charge their electric vehicle and benefit from lower tariffs and reduced vat. It should be noted that the cross-pavement channel provision will not include priority parking on the highway or any marked bay.

Ross Jarvis (RJ) also referenced the recent challenge concerning whether electricity supplied via public EV charge points should be charged VAT at 5% (the domestic electricity rate) rather than 20% (the standard rate). This would impact the tariffs and charges for use of Reading's on-street chargers provided through LEVI. The Tribunal ruled that public EV charging can qualify for the reduced 5% VAT rate under existing law, without any change to legislation but it is understood that this ruling is be challenged by HMRC.

Particulate Monitoring Update

RJ provided presentation on the Council's particulate monitoring network. Particulate matter (PM) is a mixture of very small particles and liquid droplets in the air (e.g. dust, soot, smoke...).

PM10 is particulates under 10 micrometres (coarse dust) whereas PM2.5 are particulates under 2.5 micrometres, and these are finer particles.

The National Air Quality Strategy (2023) set targets for the reduction of PM2.5

- Annual mean concentration target: Reduce PM2.5 concentrations to 10 µg/m³ or below by 2040. (EU target is 10 µg/m³ by 2030)
- Population exposure reduction target: Reduce average population exposure by 35% by 2040 compared to a 2018 baseline.
- WHO recommended average level is 5µg/m³

Through this project the Council will procure and install 30 low-cost sensors that will be located near to high risk or vulnerable populations, near schools or at locations where there is likely to be high pollution. This network will be maintained over a period of 2 years with data analysed by University of Reading. There will also be an Engagement Portal - for residents to access and use the data as well as for public health messaging.

The procurement process for this project is expected to complete early summer 2026 with deployment over the remainder of the summer. Data collection will last from August 2026 to August 2028.

3. Strategic Transport Update

James Turner (JT) provided an update on the following Strategic Transport items.

Local Transport Delivery Plan Update

In December 2025, Government announced a new consolidated approach to funding for local transport for the next Spending Review period, starting in April 2026. This approach moves away from providing opportunities for local authorities to bid for funding for specific transport schemes and initiatives through competitive processes, to a system whereby the majority of funding is allocated via a needs-based formula to local authorities

The new funding arrangements provide longer-term certainty and more flexibility for the Council to take decisions on how best to utilise this funding, with fewer grant specific conditions than have been the case with other funding stream in recent years.

The grant allocations for Reading are set out below:

Capital Grant	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Local Transport Grant	1,741,400	2,285,300	3,131,700	3,978,100
Bus Grant	1,498,600	1,528,700	1,558,900	1,589,000
Active Travel Grant	575,600	575,600	575,600	575,600
Highways Maintenance	2,873,000	3,377,000	3,641,000	4,162,000
Total	6,688,600	7,766,600	8,907,200	10,304,700

Revenue Grant	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Local Transport Grant	234,500	234,500	234,500	N/A
Bus Grant	1,074,000	1,074,000	1,074,000	N/A
Active Travel Grant	180,600	180,600	180,600	N/A
Electric Vehicle Charging	138,600	138,600	138,600	N/A
Total	1,627,700	1,627,700	1,627,700	N/A

As part of this new approach, the DfT requires local authorities to produce a Local Transport Delivery Plan. This sets out details of how the new grant will be prioritised, with details of schemes and interventions or programmes and packages of spend. An initial version of Reading's delivery plan is to be submitted to DfT in March 2026 with a more detailed plan due to be submitted September 2026.

Active Travel Infrastructure Schemes Update

ATF 3 Bath Road Castle Hill

Following the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group officers and designers continue to review the scheme, including reviewing segregation options to assess lower cost options. This would involve delivering the scheme with less civil works needed enabling more of the scheme to be delivered.

We are also undertaking traffic modelling to show the impact on Coley Avenue Junction of various options. This is to be shared with councillors for comment, but we will also be looking to get feedback from RCC.

Active Travel Revenue Activity

The Council is continuing with its active travel capability revenue activity including the delivery of:

- Free Adult Cycle Training sessions
- Free Women only Cycle Training sessions
- Free Maintenance Workshops, delivered with Reading Bike Kitchen and Reading Bike Hub.
- Town Centre Dr Bikes: April - November
- Dr Bike's in the Community
- Reading Cycle Festival Support 2026
- Walk to School Week 2026
- School Street and School Road Safety Review
- Bikeability Programme 2026-27

Cycle Hangars

Officers to undertake a more detail assessment of each location, including liaison with Network Services and other stakeholders, inc. RCC, to assess feasibility. Recommendations to be presented at Summer Cycle Forum

Sidmouth Street Cycle Scheme Update

The Council is proposing amendments to Sidmouth Street as part of wider network review taken to March's meeting of the Traffic Management Sub Committee. The plans will involve:

- Sidmouth Street remaining a one-way road northbound.
- Introduction of 2 lane entry to Sidmouth St from London Road (this requires amendment of the traffic signals in and provision of two northbound lanes for general traffic
- Introduction of a further third lane after South Street to as far as the Queens Road junction.
- Retaining a narrower contra-flow cycle lane

JT confirmed that previous feedback from RCC had been incorporated but further opportunity available through the statutory consultation. Cllr Ennis stated that RCC should send any comments over to the Council now and not wait for the statutory consultation.

LCWIP Review

Officers are currently putting together a brief for a review and update of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). This work will be supported through the appointment of external consultants, and it is intended that this commences summer 2026. Officers will provide an update on the timeframe for the LCWIP at the June CAST Forum.

RCC expressed an interest to be involved in this review process rather than just as at the consultation point.

Bus Service Improvement Plan and Zebra 2 Fund

Reading Buses launched its first set of 24 zero emission electric buses on 6th February 2026 on both routes 17 and 21. A further 8 electric buses will be delivered later in the spring 2026 for use on the route 26 with an overall total of 32 zero emission buses in Reading.

Further to this in early 2026 the Council was awarded a further £3m from the ZEBRA 2 grant for a further 17 electric buses to be delivered between now and 2030. This will bring the overall total electric buses to 49.

	<p>Cllr Barnett-Ward asked why the buses had fewer seats and less capacity than previous model. JT confirmed the specification for the buses was chosen by the operator, but the vehicles were shorter than the previous vehicles. The removal of the central door had enabled this space to be used for seating.</p>			
4.	<p>Highways and Network Services Update</p> <p>Last Crumb Junction</p> <p>The Forum discussed the junction of Prospect Street, Henley Road and Peppard Road which is known as the Last Crumb Junction after the pub by the same name nearby. Colleagues in Network Services are leading any work in this area, but it was noted that this is a large junction and any amendments will be time consuming and require significant funding.</p> <p>20mph Speed Limit Zones</p> <p>The Forum discussed the implementation of 20mph speed limit zones including the effectiveness of installing these without associated adequate traffic calming measures.</p>			
5.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>Cyclist and Pedestrian Road Safety</p> <p>This item was requested by forum members for further discussion and suggestion that it should be a regular topic of discussion at CAST or a standing agenda item.</p> <p>CALM Project Feedback</p> <p>Feedback on the CALM report had been sent in by __ however there was insufficient time to discuss. Officers will review the feedback and amend accordingly.</p>			
	<p>Date of Next Meetings:</p> <p>All meetings are scheduled for 18:30 at the Council's offices.</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p>CAST Forum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9th June 2026 • 1st December 2026 • 1st April 2027 </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p>Cycle Forum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3rd September 2026 • 10th February 2027 </td> </tr> </table>	<p>CAST Forum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9th June 2026 • 1st December 2026 • 1st April 2027 	<p>Cycle Forum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3rd September 2026 • 10th February 2027 	<p>All to Note</p>
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