

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE		
DATE:	9 JANUARY 2020	AGENDA ITEM:	6
TITLE:	SUSTRANS ACTIVATION PROJECT		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	TONY PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING & TRANSPORT
SERVICE:	TRANSPORTATION SERVICES	WARDS:	ABBEY, KATESGROVE AND MINSTER
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on the progress of the Sustrans Activation Project. This project is being funded by the Department for Transport (DfT) and led by Sustrans, a UK cycling and walking charity.
- 1.2 Appendix A - Consultation Responses
Appendix B - Detailed Designs

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Sub Committee notes the progress and attached detailed designs for the Reading Activation Project.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 Reading's Cycling Strategy: Bridging Gaps, Overcoming Barriers & Promoting Safer Cycling, was adopted by the Council on 19 March 2014 as a sub-strategy to the Local Transport Plan (LTP). The strategy includes detailed policies regarding the design principles for delivering infrastructure and route improvements for cyclists on the public highway, as well as policies to encourage and promote cycling to different demographics.
- 3.2 The Local Transport Plan, under which our Cycling Strategy has been adopted, is currently being updated to reflect changes in national guidance and local priorities, including our new Local Plan. The suite of sub-strategies that will support the emerging Local Transport Plan will include our Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, which sets out our aim for transforming our streets of a ten-year period.

4. THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 As a result of Sustrans' *Paths for Everyone* report that was published in 2018, following a two-year, independent audit of the entire National Cycle Network, the DfT have since invested £21m which has been earmarked to improve significant on-carriageway and off-carriageway stretches of the 16,575-mile National Cycle Network.

This is part of a multimillion-pound DfT investment to improve cycling and walking around England, cut down emissions and improve safety.

- 4.2 Sustrans identified 50 Activation Projects that will be targeted initially, one of which is Reading. The aim of the Reading Activation Project is to improve access to the traffic-free route between Katesgrove, Waterloo Meadows and Fobney Lock. Sustrans formed a working group to develop this project, consisting of Reading Borough Council officers (Transport Planning, Parks and Anti-Social Behaviour teams), Councillors, Canal and Rivers Trust and Thames Valley Police.
- 4.3 The working group specifically focused on barriers at the Katesgrove Underpass, at both ends of Waterloo Meadows, and at Fobney Lock. Discussions were based around developing a set of modifications to open access to people with bikes, and people using wheelchairs, adapted cycles and mobility aids, who have previously been obstructed by the awkward barriers that were originally installed to deter motorcyclists. Improvements to the surface of the path were also included within the scope of the project.
- 4.4 Sustrans have undertaken various consultation events at local community centres to make the local community aware of the proposed draft designs, and to gain an understanding of the views of various user groups. A questionnaire was produced as part of the consultation to record these views. Appendix A sets out the results of this questionnaire.
- 4.5 Following on from consultation with the local community, the following detailed designs have been finalised, in collaboration with the working group. Appendix B sets out the detailed drawings. Sustrans plan to use Reading Borough Council's in-house Highways team to undertake these works, which are due to be completed by March 2020.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 The delivery of the cycle/walking improvements outlined in this report help to deliver the following Corporate Plan Service Priorities:

- To protect and enhance the lives of vulnerable adults and children
- Keeping Reading's environment clean, green and safe
- Ensuring that there are good education, leisure and cultural opportunities for people in Reading

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

6.1 The working group is formed of Reading Borough Council officers (Transport Planning, Parks and Anti-social behaviour teams), Councillors, Canal and Rivers Trust and Thames Valley Police.

6.2 Consultation was undertaken with local community members and different user groups.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not relevant to the decision of this committee report. This project is aimed at improving access for all, and therefore various user groups have been considered as part of the development of this project.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Our transport strategy is focused on encouraging the use of sustainable transport, walking and cycling as attractive alternatives to the private car. The delivery of the schemes as set out within this report form part of this overall strategy, which has achieved considerable success in recent years including bus usage in Reading being the third highest in the country outside of London, having increased by 23% since 2010, and around 35% of trips into Reading town centre being made by pedestrians and cyclists.

8.2 Transport is the biggest greenhouse gas emitting sector in the UK accounting for around 27% of total emissions. Therefore, significant investment in sustainable transport solutions, including the schemes set out within this report, is vital in order to respond to the Climate Crisis declared by the Council in February 2019 and to help achieve our target of a carbon neutral Reading by 2030.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None - the project is being undertaken directly by Sustrans.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None - the project is being undertaken directly by Sustrans.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 Sustrans (2018), Paths for Everyone: National Cycle Network physical review and action