

## **ECC Responses to Issues Raised in Cycling Strategy Public Consultation June 2016**

A consultation was undertaken between 3<sup>rd</sup> September - 29<sup>th</sup> October 2015 on the draft Cycling Strategy, which included an online questionnaire, details of which, were publicised in the local press. A stakeholder workshop was held and was attended by over 50 participants. The issues raised in the consultation are summarised below together with the ECC responses.

### **Section 1**

**This question asked respondents if they use a bicycle**

- **The majority of respondents (81%) said that they currently use a bicycle. Of those that responded no, a third (33%) said that they ‘did not feel safe on the road’, while 11% said that there were ‘no cycle paths/routes’ for them to use and 10% said that it ‘would take too long to get where I wanted to.’**
- **When asked what would encourage them to start using a bicycle, the majority (57%) of respondents said ‘more traffic free cycle routes’, while 34% said more ‘cycle lanes printed on the roads’ and 17% said ‘more cycle parking facilities.’**

#### ***ECC Response***

To improve perceptions of safety, ECC through the draft Cycle Strategy propose to develop cycle design standards which address safety through a mixture of developing cycle routes either on quieter roads (Quietways) or to introduce some dedicated cycle routes which are segregated from motorised traffic. The design standards aim to develop common principles across the county, however individual designs will depend on local circumstances and will be tailored to local conditions.

### **Proposal 1: An Essex Cycling Advocate**

**ECC wants to ensure that the promotion and development of cycling is embedded in the councils activities, it is proposed to appoint one of the councillors as an Essex Cycling Advocate.**

Respondents were asked if they thought the appointment of an Essex Cycling Advocate would be a positive step forward. The majority of respondents (81%) agreed, while only 15 % disagreed. Several respondents expressed concerns that the ‘cycling advocate’ may not be a cyclist themselves and that this was important to ensure that they had sufficient “*understanding and knowledge about cycling.*” Other comments suggested the need for the advocate to liaise and work in partnership with other agencies, specifically Essex Highways

**There were suggestions that this person should be someone from a cycling group or the third sector.**

#### ***ECC Response***

The purpose of appointing a member is to have someone who is involved with the Council in order to advocate cycling within the body of councillors. There are already opportunities for others outside the Council who advocate cycling. There are several

councillors who regularly cycle, including a cabinet member. It is important that there is political leadership to support the strategy and meet the ambition to double the number of cycle journey stages in Essex.

## **Proposal 2: Transformational funding**

To provide the kind of cycle schemes, facilities and promotion that will get significantly more people cycling in Essex will require an increase in funding over and above the current level of funding. Respondents were asked if they agreed that increased funding is appropriate.

The majority of respondents (87%) agreed, with only a small number disagreeing (6%). When asked which funding source should have the highest priority, nearly a third (32%) chose 'additional funding from central Government', while 27% chose 'better coordination of the county council's existing spending', 29% 'improved developer contributions towards the provision of infrastructure' and 3% 'closer working with voluntary and training sectors'.

### *ECC Response*

In order to deliver the ambition to double the number of cycling journeys by 2025 as set out in the draft national policy Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (DfT), increased funding would need to be made available to local authorities. ECC will of course seek to maximise existing investment to promote cycling and will where possible make conditions on developers to design in good cycling facilities on new developments.

## **Proposal 3: Best Practice Design Guidance**

ECC are committed to ensuring that the cycling infrastructure they design looks attractive, serves its purpose and encourages more people to cycle.

Respondents were asked if they had any additional ideas regarding best practice design. Over 10% of comments suggested following the best practice of other European countries, such as the Netherlands who have "*the world's best cycling infrastructure*." There were also several comments made around the importance of consulting with existing cyclists and cycling groups, maintaining current infrastructure, clear and appropriate signage, cycle storage and the education and promotion of safe cycling.

### *ECC Response*

ECC will work with stakeholders to agree and adopt best practice design guidance, which is appropriate for a largely rural county like Essex, albeit with a focus on improving mobility in towns and along key corridors. ECC consider that the Welsh Government's cycling standards form the basis of an appropriate approach and will draw upon these resources in drawing up design standards for Essex.

## **Proposal 4 – A Cycle Essex Brand**

**ECC plan to create a Cycle Essex brand, that will change the image of cycling in Essex to a safe, normal and enjoyable everyday activity and promote it as a healthy leisure activity. Respondents were asked if they had new or innovative ideas that would further enhance the work of Cycle Essex?**

**There were over 300 comments, with nearly 20% of these expressing concerns, with many seeing branding as a “waste of money” and suggesting that infrastructure needs to come first. There were other suggestions made around the use of social media, slogans and the importance of including schools and children in the creation of an Essex brand.**

**Some respondents mentioned the need for horse riders to also be included in safety campaigns. There were also comments suggesting that ECC work with local businesses and other partners to create an Essex cycling brand and that school’s should be involved to educate children around safety.**

<i>ECC Response</i>
ECC consider that having a cycle brand will be a powerful tool to help promote cycling in Essex, in particular to encourage recognition which will enable people to gain access to information on safety, events and activities and the health benefits of cycling. It is not surprising that the high numbers of existing cyclists who responded to the survey did not necessary see the value in developing a brand, as they are highly engaged with the issues. However, in order to attract new people to cycling and explain the benefits of cycling for short journeys or as a part of a longer journey involving other modes such as rail, it is important to provide a coherent suite of promotional and information materials. Therefore developing a cycling Brand in Essex a key priority if we are to double the number of cycle journeys in the county.

### **Proposal 5: High Profile Events**

**Essex has been very successful in attracting high profile cycling events to the County that have been well attended by the public. ECC want to use those events to encourage people to make the step from spectator to cyclist.**

**Respondents were asked if they agreed that high profile events are useful for promoting cycling within Essex, with the majority (78%) of respondents agreeing and only 7% disagreeing. When asked what events are useful, over half of the comments referred to ‘High Profile’ events, however concerns were raised that these were not promoted well enough and that they did little to encourage everyday ‘normal’ cycling. Over a third of all comments suggested events that were fun or suitable for the ‘whole family’ rather than professional cyclists.**

**Respondents to the survey were very positive about using events as a way of attracting new cyclists including the Tour of Britain and Tour de France. However, non-competitive rides such as Sky Rides were also suggested. Concerns were raised that large events have the effect of generating short term interest with a risk that once over, enthusiasm wanes and follow up activities are not undertaken and do little to normalise cycling.**

<i>ECC Response</i>
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ECC consider that high profile events have the effect of generating interest in cycling and raising the profile of this important activity. Going forward, as part of normalisation of cycling there will be increased efforts to highlight the health benefits of cycling as Active Travel, to demonstrate the positive health benefits in terms of reduced risk of heart disease, stroke and diabetes of regular cycling (and walking).

### **Proposal 6: Increased support for Local Initiatives**

**ECC's support for local initiatives will ensure that people are encouraged to cycle, by local cyclists, and will be provided with regular advice and support that they need to be confident to use their bicycles on a regular basis.**

**Respondents were asked what kind of cycling initiatives should be supported in their areas.**

**Suggestions ranged from the offering of free bike workshops to learn about road safety and bike maintenance. 20% of respondents considered that cycle training should be targeted at children, working in partnership with local Schools and clubs. And there were suggestions that bikes should be made available to rent and interest free loans should be available. In addition, it was suggested improved bike storage facilities is a key component of incentivising cycling and working with employers to provide better facilities.**

#### *ECC Response*

Subject to funding availability, ECC will build upon its existing schemes and develop new ones which address the issues raised. As part of our enabling approach, it is important to balance investment between physical measures and other measures aimed at supporting individuals in their endeavours to cycle.

### **Proposal 8: Continental standard cycling facilities and Quietways.**

**Where appropriate on high demand cycling routes, ECC plan to include 'continental' standard segregated cycle facilities. On quiet residential streets, ECC want to introduce 'Quietways' where priority is given to cyclists and pedestrians over motorised traffic. Respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed they agreed with the statements that continental standard cycling facilities were appropriate for their area**

**Respondents were asked if they agreed that continental standards should be introduced in their area, the majority (82%) of people agreed, while only 8% disagreed. They were also asked the same for the introduction of 'Quietways', with the majority (80%) agreeing, and only 9% disagreeing. When asked why/why not, the majority of comments were positive, suggesting that they would encourage more people to cycle, however some respondents argued that this type of infrastructure is often poorly maintained and is not suitable for those who wish to cycle at a faster pace.**

**This reflected the perception that avoiding areas of heavy traffic will encourage more people to cycle. There was some minor dissent from this approach, with concerns that experienced cyclists would be forced to use new**

**facilities. There were also concerns around the maintenance of the new routes and the concept of shared space.**

#### *ECC Response*

ECC have to balance the needs of existing and new cyclists, to normalise cycling as an everyday activity to boost health and wellbeing and to provide an inexpensive and convenient alternative to the car for shorter journeys. Providing segregated routes and quieter routes, where appropriate, with good signage has been tried and tested in Europe and is being introduced in London. The experience in other places, suggests that improving physical infrastructure can contribute towards a step change in the take up of cycling by improving safety and helping to build confidence of new users. Furthermore new infrastructure is often seen as a key component of 'place-making' and can contribute towards the revitalisation of our town centres and can help support local businesses.

### **Proposal 9: Training and Access**

**ECC are committed to providing cycle training for all ages and improving access to bicycles for those on low incomes. When asked if investing in cycling skills training is important** the majority (77%) agreed, while only 5% disagreed.

**While most respondents supported the Bikeability scheme, some commented that it starts too late (year 6) and those teenagers and young people approaching working age should be included in the scheme. There were also comments related to the behaviour of drivers, with suggestions for a greater role for awareness raising and enforcement aimed at drivers.**

- When asked about subsidized access to bikes and equipment, over half (55%) agreed that this was worthwhile, while 17% disagreed.

#### *ECC Response*

While the Bikeability scheme is funded by Government and is delivered by partners, ECC will develop the case for funding bids to the sustainable travel access fund and other funding opportunities in order to improve training opportunities as part of delivering the cycling strategy. We will work closely with partners such as CTC and Sustrans to identify the training needs of those who would like to take up cycling and where this is greatest potential. Government are actively considering changes to the current highway code, it is right that this is implemented at a national level to ensure uniformity in terms of regulations.

**General Feedback Section - the last part of the questionnaire allowed respondents to add additional comments:** Respondents were then asked if they had any other comments regarding the strategy. Overall, there were 277 comments:

- 16% spoke about the importance of improving cycle lanes and other infrastructure to ensure that they are properly integrated into the wider Essex transport structure.
- Issues were raised around legislation and suggestions were made for ECC to lobby central government for changes in the Highway Code, specifically the idea of 'strict liability' which is widely used in other European countries.

- There were several comments highlighting the importance of linking the strategy with other agencies such as Essex Highways, specifically issues around road resurfacing and maintenance.
- 12% of comments suggested that the strategy should have a greater focus on drivers of motorized vehicles too, specifically training and promotion around overtaking cyclists safely.
- Over 6% of comments related to horse riding and bridle paths, with one person commenting that, *"All vulnerable road users should be included in this scheme"*.
- Over 10% of comments raised concerns around ensuring that ECC works with partners in order to have a more *"joined up thinking with districts, boroughs and the cities"*.
- 6% of the comments related to improved cycle lanes and or facilities and the need to provide better quality infrastructure.
- 5% of comments related to safety, with many respondents suggesting that people's safety was more important than training and skills, and that feeling safe on a bike was a catalyst to getting more people to cycle.
- 4% of comments highlighted the importance of road maintenance, with several of the respondents commenting about the poor state of the roads, specifically the new 'resurfacing' that has happened this year, where the 'surface dressing' makes it 'dangerous for cyclists'
- 4% of comments related to the maintenance of existing cycling infrastructure, saying that this must be undertaken.
- 4% of comments related to training, with several respondents highlighting the importance of providing accessible training for things such as general bike maintenance.
- 3% of comments spoke about the importance having improved cycle storage
- Just over 2% of comments suggested that there needs to be a greater emphasis on advertising and promotion of the strategy, including its benefits.
- 2% mentioned the importance of events and the need to recognise the different types of cyclists that exist.

<i>ECC Response</i>
<p>The emphasis of these comments is clearly around infrastructure provision and its maintenance and on safety matters. Another important aspect is the joined up approach of planning for cycling between Districts and the County Council. These matters are already clearly articulated in the strategy as aspects to be pursued. Also it is worth bearing in mind that the Cycling Strategy is one of a number of policies and strategies and there are others on maintenance and safety for example as well as Public Rights of Way.</p>