

SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL - STOCKPORT CYCLING STRATEGIC REVIEW
COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

Report of the Director of Place Management

1. Introduction

- 1.1. As part of the Scrutiny Work Programme approved by the Council, a review by the Communities and Transport Scrutiny Committee was agreed to review how Stockport Council approaches and delivers cycling schemes within the borough.
- 1.2. The report details the review carried out by the Communities and Transport Scrutiny Review Panel in to Cycling.

2. Methodology

- 2.1. A Scrutiny Review Panel was established to undertake the review comprising:
Councillor Jon Byrne (Chair);
Councillor Geoff Abell;
Councillor Joe Barratt;
Councillor Dominic Hardwick
Councillor Dan Oliver; and
Councillor Matt Wynne.
- 2.2. Officers in attendance:
Jamie Birtle – Assistant Director Strategic Infrastructure
Sue Stevenson – Head of Highways and Transportation
Nick Whelan – Feasibility and Client Team Manager
Brian Davis – Design and Construction Manager
Emily Brough – Strategy, Policy and Research Team Manager
- 2.3. Officer from Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) in attendance
Richard Nickson – Active Travel Network Director

The Panel met four times and had a site visit to a cycle scheme that had been delivered in the borough. The first meeting of the Stockport cycling strategic review scrutiny panel was held on the 18th of July 2024. Following the first meeting a range of issues were discussed it was ultimately recommended that the Strategic Cycling Scrutiny Review considers the following topic areas:

- Develop an understanding of the various roles the Council undertakes to encourage cycling and the key stakeholders.
- Understand the policy background, and review the actions taken to encourage cycling and progress to date, including schemes of different impacts.
- Understand the potential financial implications for Stockport for both capital and revenue financing to support these activities.

- Identifying opportunities to encourage cycling in Stockport identifying opportunities to encourage cycling in Stockport, how cycling can contribute to the net zero goal and improve air quality, improved travel times, cycle accessibility, and public health.
- Understand and comment on the process for delivering cycling infrastructure.

2.4. The second meeting of the panel on the 25th of September 2024 was the first meeting of the evidence gathering phase of the review. This meeting received the following information:

2.4.1. A Strategy and Policy Overview (Appendix 1, 1a & 1b) which set out the development of how cycle schemes are informed by policies and strategies at national, regional and local level and include input from multiple directorates within the Council, including Highways, Health and Education.

2.4.2. A Monitoring and Evaluation Overview (Appendix 2, 2a and 2b) providing a range of different monitoring information including national satisfaction surveys, regional traffic data collection, regional travel diary surveys , information from the census, the Greater Manchester walking and cycling index, the monitoring of schemes, internal Stockport reporting on delivery off the Council's plan and different monitoring elements worked to capture the changing landscape of cycling

2.4.3. A overview of the funding and financial constraints on the delivery of schemes at different stages of development as part of bringing forward the cycle strategy. Including an overview of the different funding types involved.

2.5. The site visit to the Bramhall Park to A6 Cycle Route was undertaken on the 8th of November 2024. The visit had members of the panel ride the route and experience the new scheme whilst being able to discuss the decisions made to design the scheme and the subsequent decisions around the scheme.

2.6. The third meeting of the panel on the 13th of November 2024 was the opportunity for evidence gathering within the review. This meeting received the following:

2.6.1. Representatives of Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) gave a presentation about their role and working with Stockport. Including an overview of their developing strategy for the bee network.

2.6.2. The site visit to the Bramhall to A6 cycle route was discussed by the panel. As part of this it was noted that joint officer/member cycle-based site visits be employed for future cycling schemes.

2.6.3. A overview of how schemes are developed and the sign off processes involved to get political and financial approval to deliver them. (Appendix 3)

2.6.4. A report on the consultation process and the reporting that comes from these consultations. (Appendix 4, 4a and 4b)

- 2.6.5. The outcome of the 20mph review and the proposed approach to rolling out 20mph zones.(Appendix 5 and 5a)
- 2.7. The final meeting of the panel on the 5th of February 2025 received the following:
- 2.7.1. We also drew attention to the recently published [Walking and Cycling Update Report](#) presented at the Communities and Transport Scrutiny committee of the 20th of January and provided further monitoring data from the Active Lives Survey and the Travel Diaries Survey (TRADS), released by Transport for Greater Manchester (TFGM). (Appendix 6)
- 2.7.2. Two local stakeholder groups submitted written evidence statements and then took part in a question and answer session with the panel. The representatives were – Andy Shaw and Andy Pennell from the Stockport Community Cycling Club and Will York, Eleanor Roaf and Helen Pidd from walk Ride GM and Walk Ride Stockport.(Appendix 7 and 8)
- 2.8. Following this meeting panel members fed in to a proposal of conclusions and recommendations for officers to include in this report.

3. Comments and Recommendations

- 3.1. The Comments and Recommendations of the Scrutiny Review Panel are as follows:
- 3.1.1. Stockport faces significant challenges in increasing cycling participation and delivering a transport network that supports active travel. Despite policy commitments and investment in cycle infrastructure, the proportion of adults cycling for any purpose at least once per week in Stockport has **declined from 11.7% in 2020 to just 6% in 2023**, which ranks significantly below the current English and Greater Manchester average of 10%.
- 3.1.2. Without decisive action, the borough risks further decline in cycling uptake, limiting the benefits of active travel for public health, air quality, and congestion reduction.
- 3.1.3. The recommendations outlined in this report set out practical steps to create a safer, more accessible, and more effective cycling network in Stockport. They provide **a measured and realistic pathway forward**, ensuring that cycling is integrated into Stockport's transport planning and climate action commitments, to deliver on Greater Manchester's target of ensuring that 50% of all journeys in the region are made by walking, cycling and public transport by 2040.
- 3.1.4. **One: Develop a Fully Mapped Active Travel Network Plan**
- 3.1.4.1. Understanding the end goal for our active travel network is key to ensure our residents join us on the journey. The review panel acknowledges that the council officers have a network vision, however, **there is no definitive, publicly available, council document outlining this.**

3.1.4.2. **The review panel, therefore, recommends developing a comprehensive active travel network plan to firmly embed cycling as a viable public transport option, ensuring that it aligns with regional strategies such as the Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040 and the Bee Network.**

3.1.4.3. This plan should be interactive and be regularly reviewed, providing opportunity for collaborative input from residents and active travel interest groups. This active travel network plan should also take note of and complement the emerging Local Plan.

3.1.5. **Two: Prioritise Protected Cycleways Infrastructure along Main Arterial Routes**

3.1.5.1. The report acknowledges that segregated and direct routes along main roads provide the best safety and accessibility for cyclists and have led to year-on-year growth in cycling numbers, as has been demonstrated on the Wilmslow Road Cycleway.

3.1.5.2. In addition, a 2020 study from Transport for London (TfL) found that **cycling rates increased by 72% on routes where protected cycle lanes were introduced**, demonstrating a clear link between infrastructure improvements and modal shift, and data from the UK Department for Transport (DfT) indicates that **roads with segregated cycling infrastructure see 40% fewer collisions involving cyclists compared to roads without dedicated lanes.**

3.1.5.3. Whilst the panel recognises the debate that has emerged on the subject of accessibility concerns surrounding the use of bus stop bypasses (i.e.. floating bus stops), evidence from the Bus Stop Bypass Safety Review 2024 indicates that the **risk of pedestrian injury at these locations is very low**, with only six recorded pedestrian casualties over a three-year period compared to more than 11,400 pedestrian injuries involving motor vehicles.

3.1.5.4. We, therefore, **recommend that segregated cycleways on main road routes become the default**, with bus stop bypasses used when appropriate, and any deviation to shared footpaths or parallel routes to be fully justified in advance.

3.1.5.5. Furthermore, Stockport should actively explore the implementation of **CYCLOPS junctions** at key locations, building on successful approaches in Salford, Manchester and Trafford.

3.1.5.6. For clarity the implementation of these direct routes should not be at the expense of other sustainable transport methods and should consider any relevant local factors.

3.1.6. Three: Further Integrate Cycling Provision into the Council's Core Strategy

3.1.6.1. Active travel, including cycling, is more than just a transport issue, it is a fundamental tool in achieving the council's wider objectives.

3.1.6.2. For example, it supports the borough's goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2038, by reducing reliance on private cars, enabling the creation of much-needed housing without the constraints of excessive parking demand. It also improves public health, by lowering the risk of conditions like heart disease, tackles air pollution and congestion, and delivers significant mental well-being benefits by encouraging active lifestyles and greater interaction with local environments.

3.1.6.3. The review panel recommends that the council ensures that active travel is prioritised in the council's core strategic objectives, including within the Climate Action Now Strategy, Public Health Plans, Transport Strategies and Local Plan.

3.1.7. Four: Improve the Safety and Accessibility for Women in Active Travel

3.1.7.1. Whilst active travel offers numerous benefits, legitimate concerns around safety can significantly influence the participation of women when it comes to cycling. Research indicates that women often feel less safe than men in public spaces and on public transport. Factors such as poorly lit roads, isolated cycle routes, and fear of harassment contribute to these concerns.

3.1.7.2. Nationally, there is a notable gender disparity in cycling rates. As of 2023, 21% of males aged 16 and over cycled at least once a week. In contrast, women's participation is markedly lower, with studies indicating that men make three times as many cycle trips annually as women.

3.1.7.3. In Stockport, the absence of gender-disaggregated data on cycling participation hinders the development of targeted interventions to address these safety concerns. Without understanding how many women cycle, or the specific challenges they face, it is challenging to implement effective measures to encourage female participation in active travel.

3.1.7.4. The review panel, therefore, recommends that efforts are made to address safety concerns to help promote active travel among women. This may involve the collection of gender-specific data on cycling participation in Stockport, as well as more informal conversations with women to better understand the main barriers to active travel.

3.1.7.5. By prioritising women's safety in active travel planning and gathering relevant data, Stockport can work towards creating an inclusive

environment that encourages more women to engage in cycling, thereby contributing to better public health and improved environmental sustainability.

3.1.8. Five: Improve Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement

3.1.8.1. The panel recognises the benefits of engaging with local user groups, both in collaboration but also as critical friends. However, it was clear from our engagement with these groups during the review process that the relationship between the council and these groups currently does not provide the best outcomes. **The review panel, therefore, recommends there is a reset in these relationships as we move forward, and that plans to move the frequency of the Walking and Cycling Forum from quarterly to six-monthly should be reversed.**

3.1.8.2. Furthermore, as part of the process to develop a comprehensive, mapped active travel network plan, **we recommend that these user groups are engaged in a co-design capacity**, drawing on their member's experience in cycling across the town for both leisure and transport. As part of this process, there should also be the opportunity for other user groups such as those representing disabled people, those with visual impairment and other local interest groups. **We acknowledge that all co-design activities will be conducted in accordance with the council's internal governance procedures, including obtaining necessary member approvals before engaging with external groups or the public.**

3.1.8.3. In addition, to ensure the highest level of engagement and response, consultations on schemes must be made as accessible to all members of the community as possible. For all voices to be heard, from users of all types of transport, **the panel encourages the council to use all available tools to engage with the widest possible audience, including providing support at libraries and recommends that we learn from other local authorities by moving to a more visual and storytelling approach, with detailed drawings reserved for those who wish to delve deeper.**

3.1.9. Six: Accelerate Efforts to Remove Non-Compliant Access Control Measures

3.1.9.1. Access control measures such as chicane barriers, A-frames, and restrictive bollards present significant obstacles to cyclists, particularly those using non-standard cycles, cargo bikes, or adapted bicycles used by disabled riders. *Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/20* explicitly states that such measures should not be used, as they limit the usability of cycle routes for everyone and reduce the capacity, directness, and comfort of cycling infrastructure.

3.1.9.2. Whilst we acknowledge the work being done in this area, **the review panel recommends the acceleration of efforts to remove restrictive barriers through a structured programme, setting a clear deadline for their elimination on designated cycle routes. The council should also engage with disabled cyclists and accessibility groups to ensure that new infrastructure does not create unintended barriers to cycling.**

3.1.10. **Seven: Establish a Regular Tour of Outcomes for Active Travel Infrastructure**

3.1.10.1. As part of our scrutiny review process, members of the panel took part in a very informative site visit to the Bramhall to A6 Scheme, on cycles and on foot, to look at both the strategic plan and at the engineers solutions and decisions that were part of delivering it. This trip was recognised by both officers and councillors as an excellent use of time and allowed all of us to understand concerns from residents, users and officers.

3.1.10.2. **We therefore recommend there are annual tours of outcomes visits to active travel infrastructure**, this should be a fully accessible event and include walking, wheeling and cycling. Additionally for major schemes, site visits with relevant councillors and officers should be undertaken in a similar fashion.

3.1.11. **Eight: Expand the Implementation of 20mph Zones to Support Safer Active Travel**

3.1.11.1. Where segregated cycling facilities cannot be provided a 20mph speed limit can support the safe sharing of the road space. Within the Portfolio Performance and Resources Mid-Year Report 2024/25 for Highways, Transport and Parks Services, it is noted that the council's target of delivering 7 miles of completed 20mph schemes is low (0.25 miles) as the council is waiting for a number of schemes to progress through the various governance processes.

3.1.11.2. Furthermore, despite the council setting out a clear policy for the introduction of 20mph zones without the need for traffic calming measures, we are not sure all councillors understand the policy or the process to introduce new 20mph zones within their delegated budgets.

3.1.11.3. **The review panel, therefore, requests an update on the progress being made to reach the target of 7 miles of new 20mph schemes in 2024/25 and request that the Highways Department arrange an all councillor briefing to explain how ward delegated budgets can be most effectively used to transition as many suitable residential roads to 20mph zones.**

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are none

Anyone wishing to inspect the above background papers or requiring further information should contact Jamie Birtles, Sue Stevenson on Tel: 07356 120 423, Tel: 0161-474-4351 or by email on jamie.birtles@stockport.gov.uk, sue.stevenson@stockport.gov.uk