

**ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE****Tuesday, 16 March 2021**

<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>'GEAR CHANGE' DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT PLAN FOR CYCLING AND WALKING</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND PLACE</b>

**REPORT SUMMARY**

This report is to ask Members to note the publication of 'Gear Change', the Department of Transport's Cycling and Walking Plan for England and the associated cycle infrastructure design guidance contained in Local Transport Note 1/20.

Increasing levels of sustainable travel and enabling modal shift is at the heart of the emerging Local Plan which is set in the wider context of the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency and the target in the Cool2 Strategy to a 'complete transition to fossil fuel free local travel by around 2030'.

The Wirral Plan 2025 sets out the Council's vision to secure the best possible future for our residents, defined by the community prosperity we create and supported by our excellent people and services. This report directly supports the following key themes within that plan.

- A cleaner, greener borough which celebrates, protects and improves our environment and urgently tackles the climate emergency
- A prosperous inclusive economy where local people can get good jobs and achieve their aspirations
- Safe, vibrant communities where people want to live and raise their families

This matter affects all Wards within the Borough.

This matter is not a Key Decision.

**RECOMMENDATION**

The Environment, Transport and Climate Emergency Committee is recommended to:

Note the publication of the Department for Transport Cycling and Walking Strategy 'Gear Change' and the associated cycle infrastructure design guidance contained in Local Transport Note 1/20.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 1.1 The publication of 'Gear Change' and the associated technical guidance is seen as a positive step to supporting the Council in the delivery of increased levels of sustainable travel as set out in the emerging Local Plan and to support actions required to address the Climate Emergency and the target in the Cool2 Strategy to 'a complete transition to fossil fuel free local travel by around 2030'.

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 No other options have been considered. The document is published by the Department of Transport.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 In 2017 the Department of Transport published its Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy which set out the ambition for England to make cycling and walking the natural choices for shorter journeys, or as part of a longer journey. The strategy sets out how the Government wishes to change the perception of cycling from being seen as a niche activity to a normal activity for all. The benefits are considered to be wide ranging, for people cheaper travel and better health, for businesses increased productivity and increased footfall in shops and for society as a whole it means lower congestion, better air quality, and vibrant, attractive places and communities.
- 3.2 Investing in active travel can bring environmental, health and economic benefits:
- Promoting active travel can result in reduced emissions of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), Particulate matter (PM) and CO<sub>2</sub> helping to tackle climate change and improve air quality.
  - Active travel can contribute towards the recommended 150 minutes of physical activity for adults each week, which are hugely important for maintaining health.
  - Walking and cycling can contribute towards economic performance by reducing congestion, supporting local businesses and more. The benefit to cost ratio of investments in walking and cycling are estimated at 5.62:1 (or 'very high' value for money).
- 3.3 In July 2020, the Department of Transport published Gear Change: A bold vision for cycling and walking for 2020-25. This plan was described by the Prime Minister as the "most ambitious plan yet to boost cycling and walking". Some of the key policies to deliver on this ambition are:
- £2bn of ringfenced funding for walking and cycling overseen and administered by Active Travel England a new inspectorate, which will ensure projects meet new design standards, and be delivered on time.
  - The creation of a 'national e-Bike programme' – this will enable the elderly, or those who travel far to take to bikes as part of journeys.
  - A new approach on health will be piloted in selected places with poor health rates to encourage GPs to prescribe cycling, with patients able to access bikes through their local surgery.

- Improvements to the National Cycle Network.
- Making streets safer by consulting to strengthen the Highway Code to better protect pedestrians and cyclists; improving legal protections for vulnerable road users; raising safety standards on lorries; and working with the police and retailers to tackle bike theft.

- 3.4 Alongside Gear Change, a new Local Transport Note (LTN1/20) was published by the Department of Transport setting out new standards for infrastructure design. LTN1/20 sets out five core design principles which represent the essential requirements to achieve more people travelling by cycle or on foot, based on best practice both internationally and across the UK. LTN1/20 set outs that networks and routes should be coherent, direct, safe, comfortable, and attractive.
- 3.5 To support this vision the Government have set out that £2 billion of new investment, in addition to existing funding, will be provided over the next five years. However, Gear Change makes clear that the Government will not fund or part-fund any scheme that does not meet the new standards and principles. A new commissioning body and inspectorate, Active Travel England, led by a new national cycling and walking commissioner will be established in the near future which will have the power to hold the active travel budget, approve and inspect schemes, lead on training, good practice, knowledge sharing, inspect highway authorities and review major planning applications. Active Travel England will also begin to inspect, and publish annual reports on highway authorities, whether or not they have received funding, grading them on their performance on active travel and identifying particularly dangerous failings in their highways for cyclists and pedestrians. It is the intention that the commissioner and inspectorate will in this regard perform a similar role to Ofsted in raising standards and challenging failure.
- 3.6 The Government consider that Covid-enforced lockdown has resulted in increased rates of walking and cycling across England. This pattern is said to have been repeated worldwide with many authorities acting rapidly to expand space for cycling and walking. In May 2020, the Department of Transport announced a £250 million emergency active travel fund, which is the “first stage of a £2 billion investment, and part of the £5 billion in new funding announced for cycling and buses in February.” The Department of Transport also published fast-tracked statutory guidance for local authorities to “make significant changes to their road layouts to give more space to cyclists and pedestrians”.

## **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the noting of this report. However, the Department for Transport have set out that £2billion of new investment for active travel will be available over the next five years. The guidance makes it clear that the Department for Transport will not fund or part fund any scheme which does not meet the new standards or principles. Adherence to this guidance will therefore ensure that Wirral is best placed to secure funding going forward.

## **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from the noting of the report.

## **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

- 6.1 There are no additional staffing, ICT or assets implications arising from the noting of this report.

## **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 7.1 There are no direct risks arising from the noting of the report, however failure to adhere to the strategy and technical guidance may result in the Council failing to meet the standards set by the new Active Travel England body.
- 7.2 The new Active Travel England body will assess Wirral's performance with respect to sustainable travel outcomes, particularly cycling and walking, which will be taken into account when considering funding allocations for local transport schemes. The new Active Travel England funding body will enforce the standards with the aim of raising performance.

## **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 There is no formal consultation required as this is a published document by the Department for Transport.
- 8.2. With regard to consultation regarding active travel schemes Wirral Council has a statutory consultation processes that is required for the undertaking of work on the adopted highway which will require public consultation, objections to which would be considered under the Scheme of Delegation in the Council's Constitution or by the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee once a level of objections have been reached exceeding the current scheme of Delegation number.
- 8.3 In addition the Council currently has a formally constituted Active Travel Forum, membership of this group is open to anyone individual or organisation with an interest in active travel. Members of this forum will continue to be engaged as these Active Travel programmes develop.

## **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.
- 9.2. Whilst there are no equality implications arising from this report, the associated actions arising from the delivery may need to assess any equality issues and mitigate where possible any negative impact that may emerge.

## **10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 Increasing cycling and walking will help combat climate change. By encouraging and enabling people to travel more on foot and by cycle instead of private car

harmful emissions will be reduced. Promoting active travel can result in reduced emissions of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), particulate matter (PM) and CO<sub>2</sub> helping to tackle climate change and improve air quality.

- 10.2 Gear Change identifies that mode shift to active transport is one of the most cost effective ways of reducing transport emissions and that meeting the targets to double cycling and increasing walking would lead to savings of £567million annually from air quality alone and prevent 8,300 premature deaths each year and provide opportunities to improve green spaces and biodiversity.

**REPORT AUTHOR: Julie Barnes**  
(Julie Barnes, Strategic Transport Infrastructure - Lead  
Commissioner - Transport and Tech)  
telephone:  
email: juliebarnes@wirral.gov.uk

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1

Gear Change – A bold vision for Cycling and Walking Department for Transport July 2020

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/904146/gear-change-a-bold-vision-for-cycling-and-walking.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/904146/gear-change-a-bold-vision-for-cycling-and-walking.pdf)

### Appendix 2

Cycling Infrastructure Design Local Transport Note 1/20

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-120>

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

**Department for Transport Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy 2017**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/918442/cycling-walking-investment-strategy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/918442/cycling-walking-investment-strategy.pdf)

**Sustrans Bike Life Report Liverpool City Region**

<https://www.sustrans.org.uk/bike-life/bike-life-liverpool-city-region/>

## SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date

