
**Meeting of Executive Member for City
Strategy and Advisory Panel**

10 September 2007

Report of the Director of City Strategy

**PETITION FROM RESIDENTS OF RUFFORTH REQUESTING A
CYCLE ROUTE BETWEEN THEIR VILLAGE AND ACOMB**

Summary

1. This report advises the Advisory Panel of the receipt of a petition from residents of Rufforth requesting that a cycle route be provided between their village and Acomb.

Background

2. The 11 page petition was passed to a meeting of the Full Council on the 28th June 2007 by Councillor Ben Hudson and contained 166 signatures.
3. The wording of the petition is as follows;
“We, the undersigned, support the proposal to construct a cycle path linking Rufforth to Acomb.” A copy of the front sheet of the petition is included as Annex 1.
4. A similar petition was submitted to the council by Rufforth Parish Council containing 211 signatures in June 2004, this was reported to the former Planning & Transport EMAP on 6th April 2005. The approved recommendations of that report were:
 - that Members should note the content of the petition, and ask officers to give due consideration to the comments of the petitioners;
 - ask officers to use the revised scheme prioritisation methodology to assess whether a Rufforth to Acomb cycle path should be taken forward as part of LTP2;
 - ask officers to write to the lead petitioner to inform them of this decision.
5. In the interim period several meetings have taken place with representatives of Rufforth & Knapton Parish Council, Sustrans and officers from the council’s Public Rights of Way team and Transport Planning Unit.
6. The outcome of the first of these meetings was a recommendation that the Rufforth residents and Parish Council should set up a steering group which would co-ordinate the feasibility work and take the project as far as it could and

that the group would then present a firm proposal to the council officers for them to consider for potential inclusion in future transport capital programmes.

7. To date the steering group have:
 - undergone a process of identifying a preferred route (shown in Annex 2), this route is approximately 3km in length and would take cyclists to the city-side of the outer ring road;
 - identified the landowners along that route;
 - commenced discussions with these landowners about the possibility of the route crossing their land;
 - organised a public consultation event during June 2007, to which all villagers were invited to express their views; and
 - commenced discussions with Yorwaste representatives about potential funding streams towards the cost of the scheme.
8. The most recent petition is a by-product of the above public consultation event and is a further expression of the wishes of the villagers.

Consultation

9. Since the first petition was submitted the ward members have changed following the recent local elections. The new ward members have been consulted on their opinions about the proposal and their comments are included below.
10. Cllr. Ian Gillies – No objections to any scheme provided the relevant safeguards are in place, including the funding. This would appear to be some way off. Just as an afterthought, I have not seen an estimate of the number of users of the proposed scheme, except for the children attending Manor School. Their route could change however, when the new school opens.
11. Cllr. Ben Hudson – I am obviously pleased to support the petition however I recognise the need for some partnership funding to be in place before the council could support the scheme.
12. Cllr. Paul Healey – I would agree with the recommendations and support Cllr. Gillies' feedback

Options

13. There are two main options available to members:
 - That council officers continue to provide limited support as and when required for the steering group to work up a scheme for potential inclusion in future capital programmes should funding become available. This work may include such tasks as scheme cost estimation and any highway-related work required to link the route into the highway network at either end and to cross the A1237 safely. The work could also involve helping the group to identify potential external sources of funding to pay for the cycle route, should it be feasible, to increase the probability of a route being provided if full or partial council capital funding cannot be guaranteed.

- To discontinue investigation into the possibility of providing a cycle route.

Analysis

The Need for a Cycle Route

14. Wetherby Road is not a very attractive road to cycle along due to the speed, volume and make-up of traffic travelling along it. As both the Harewood Whin landfill site and K&J Logistics are directly accessed from Wetherby Road there is a much larger than average proportion of heavy goods vehicles travelling along it. The majority of the road between the A1237 roundabout and Rufforth village has a 60mph speed limit and has several bends along its length which further add to the potential danger because of reduced visibility.
15. Should an off-road route be built, this would not only serve the residents of Rufforth travelling into York but also residents of York travelling in the other direction (mostly for leisure rides). Sustrans have also indicated that they are hoping to extend National Cycle Network route 66 (which currently runs from Hull, through East Riding and finishes at York's Millennium Bridge) all the way through to Tadcaster, Wetherby and to then link into routes to Harrogate, Leeds and onto Manchester. As there is currently no definitive route agreed between the Millennium Bridge and Tadcaster, this proposal could be utilised.

Scheme Priority

16. Schemes in the more rural areas of the York district tend to score poorly during the capital programme scheme prioritisation process. This is mainly due to the relatively low potential usage of such a scheme compared to routes in the urban area. The potential cost of implementing this proposal will also count against it during the prioritisation process as the cost to provide an off-road 3km path, the majority of which will be on private land (with landowners needing to be compensated for loss of their land), and a safe crossing of the outer ring road could be in the order of £300K to £500K. The major positive factors to help increase the priority score are the potential road safety improvements and increasing levels of accessibility, especially for people without access to a car.
17. The prioritisation process for next year's capital programme (2008/09) will be undertaken in January. If this scheme has reached a stage by then where it can be reasonably assessed it will be included in the prioritisation along with the other requests. Feasibility work will also need to be undertaken by council officers on the section of the route where it crosses the outer ring road and on a route between the outer ring road and Acomb, there is no current budget to undertake such a study therefore this would need to be put forward for funding next financial year.

Partnership Working

18. Partnership working between the steering group, council officers and Sustrans has resulted in a much more structured approach being taken to progressing

the initial concept of a route between Rufforth and Acomb. Since this joint working group was set up much more progress has been made towards producing a workable proposal.

19. If the council were to discontinue its work on the proposal this would have a knock-on effect on the following policy areas of the Local Transport Plan:
 - Social inclusion – residents are discouraged from cycling into York along the Wetherby Road by the speed, volume and type of traffic using it, they are also severed from the main urban area by the outer ring road therefore those residents who don't have access to a car are marginalised;
 - Accessibility – access to employment, leisure, education, retail and healthcare sites, which tend to be mostly located in the urban area, is reduced by limiting the types of transport by which they can be accessed and the time periods over which they are available given the reduced level of public transport provision compared to the urban areas of York;
 - Safety – providing facilities for cyclists away from busy roads has the potential to reduce the casualty rates and also the perception of danger which can put people off making journeys in the first instance.
20. The next steps which need to be undertaken are for another meeting to take place between the steering group, council officers and Sustrans to brief all parties on the current state of play in relation to how far the group have got with negotiations with landowners and whether the preferred route has been affected by the outcome of these.

Corporate Objectives

21. The scheme, if successful, would contribute to the following Corporate Priorities:
 - Increase the use of public and other environmentally friendly modes of transport.
The scheme would make accessibility by cycle (and also on foot) easier, and may encourage residents not to drive into Acomb and beyond from Rufforth.
 - Improve the health and lifestyles of the people who live in York, in particular among groups whose levels of health are the poorest.
The scheme will encourage more cycling and walking which will have a knock-on effect for health.
 - Improve our focus on the needs of customers and residents in designing and providing services.
This is a customer-led scheme with support from the majority of Rufforth's population.
 - Improve the way the Council and its partners work together to deliver better services for the people who live in York.
This scheme will encourage partnership working between council departments (Transport Planning and Public Rights of Way), Rufforth Parish Council, landowners and Sustrans.

22. Local Transport Plan (LTP) : The scheme would contribute to several of the aims of the recently submitted LTP, namely:
- To reduce the need to travel, especially by car, and encourage essential journeys to be undertaken by more sustainable modes;
 - To reduce levels of traffic congestion;
 - To reduce the levels of actual and perceived safety problems;
 - To enhance opportunities for all community members, including disadvantaged groups, to play an active part in society;
 - To improve the health of those who live or work in, or visit, York;
 - To reduce the impact of traffic and travel on the environment, including air quality, noise and the use of non-renewable resources;
 - To provide a transport system that is affordable and achievable in practical terms, and offers value for money.

Implications

23. This report has the following implications:
- **Financial** - This report has implications for the potential allocation of future LTP capital programmes. The potential scheme costs will be assessed as part of the feasibility work, these costs will then be fed into the cycle scheme prioritisation process as and when a firm proposal is submitted. It is estimated that this scheme could cost somewhere in the order of £300K - £500K (including a crossing of the A1237 Outer Ring Road). It should be noted that an initial review against the prioritisation methodology used for the preparation of the 2007/08 LTP programme suggests that the cost of the scheme would have to be substantially lower than anticipated before it could be considered good value for money compared to other schemes.
 - **Human Resources (HR)** – there are no HR implications
 - **Equalities** – The proposed path sounds suitable for disabled people to use. Since this is next to a major route into town the most likely users will be cyclists, but the provision of a wide path (3m), smooth surface and textured paving at crossings and junctions will ensure it's suitable for wheelchair users and visually impaired people.
 - **Legal** – there are no legal implications
 - **Crime and Disorder** – Road Safety and casualty reduction is a priority for Safer York Partnership. We would therefore support any schemes designed to make cycling safer. The report clearly identifies that alternative cycle routes between Rufforth and Acomb involve busy roads

with high speed limits, therefore we would strongly support the development of a safe cycle route between these two areas of the city.

- **Information Technology (IT)** – there are no IT implications
- **Property** – The key to the whole project is the landowners and their willingness to sell the land for the cycle path. Some will probably be tenants, with owners living at the other end of the country. I suggest that the project group obtain written undertakings from the land owners/tenants that subject to funding and planning that they would be willing to sell or grant a right of way (on the basis if the cycleway fell into disuse in the far future - the land would return to the owners) subject to consideration being settled. This would give some certainty to the project.
- **Sustainability** – No comments at the time of publishing
- **Other** – None

Risk Management

24. In compliance with the Council's Risk Management Strategy the main risk which has been identified in this report could lead to the inability to meet business objectives (Strategic).
25. Measured in terms of impact and likelihood, the risk score for the recommendation is less than 16 and thus at this point the risks need only to be monitored as they do not provide a real threat to the achievement of the objectives of this report.

Recommendations

26. That the Advisory Panel advise the Executive Member to:
 - i. Note the content of the petition, and ask officers to continue to provide support to the steering group;
Reason : To enable the proposed scheme to be properly assessed and for accurate costs to be calculated to enable it to be prioritised against other potential cycle schemes for potential capital programme funds. Also to provide advice on alternative sources of funding to the steering group to better the chances of implementation.
 - ii. Reply to the lead petitioner;
Reason : To inform them of the panel's decision

Contact Details

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Report Approved **Date** 24 August 2007**Wards Affected:** Rural York West**All**

For further information please contact the author of the report

Specialist Officers Consulted

Financial Tony Clarke, Capital Programme Manager ext. 1641	Equalities Heather Johnson, Assistant Equalities Officer ext. 1726
Crime & Disorder Jane Mowat, Director - Safer York Partnership tel. 669077	Property John Urwin, Property Manager ext. 3362
Sustainability Kristina Peat, Sustainability Officer ext. 1666	

Background Papers:

Planning & Transport EMAP Report 6th April 2005

Annexes

Annex 1 Copy of front page of petition.
Annex 2 Preferred route identified by the steering group.