



Northumberland

County Council

CABINET

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'Our Way' Vision for Cycling and Walking in Northumberland

Report of: Juliemma McLoughlin, Executive Director of Regeneration, Commercial & Economy

Cabinet Member: Councillor Cath Homer, Portfolio holder for Culture, Arts, Leisure and Tourism

Purpose of report

We want Northumberland to be synonymous with walking and cycling and have a vision that Northumberland will deliver a high quality, safe walking and cycling experience to be enjoyed by increasing numbers of residents, businesses and visitors. We will achieve this vision by working with our partners, combining our efforts to maximise the economic, health, environmental and community benefits to be gained.

This report provides an overview of the refreshed Northumberland vision for cycling and walking - '*Our Way*', setting out Northumberland's ambition to encourage more people of all ages and circumstances to walk and cycle more often. The development of an integrated delivery plan will maximise the scope to attract external funding contributions to support the '*Our Way*' vision.

Recommendations

Cabinet are invited to:

- Endorse the Northumberland vision for cycling and walking as proposed by the Northumberland Cycling and Walking Board as attached at Appendix 1;
- Welcome the development of an integrated Delivery Plan that will outline an investment programme to deliver short and medium and long term priorities; and
- Acknowledge that whilst this delivery plan will provide a robust mechanism for maximising the securing of external funding contributions, it will also define the future investment programme for cycling and walking to be met from the Local Transport Plan (LTP).

Link to Corporate Plan

Supporting and promoting greater levels of walking and cycling will enable us to deliver our commitments as set out in the Corporate Plan 2018-21, by

- Enabling residents to feel safe and enjoy a long and healthy life (**living**);
- Protecting and enhancing the vibrancy of the town centres and the unique characteristics of the county (**enjoying**); and
- Ensuring connectivity to work, learning and services and create the right conditions to support economic growth (**connecting**).

Key issues

The Northumberland Cycling and Walking Board has now refreshed it's vision, 'Our Way', setting out Northumberland's ambition to encourage more people of all ages and circumstances to walk and cycle more often.

The document has a vision that '***We want more people to walk and cycle more often***', and as such particularly focuses on the active promotion, facilitation and provision of:

- improved infrastructure to support increased levels of cycling and walking in the county as a mode of transport, particularly for shorter journeys; and
- the further development of walking and cycling leisure and tourism activities, offers key economic, social and environmental benefits for Northumberland.

An integrated delivery plan is currently under development, translating the vision into a programme of short, medium and long term interventions. A range of additional funding opportunities will be explored to support the delivery of the plan, although the scale of investment anticipated through this process may have implications for future funding through the Local Transport Plan.

Background

1. Northumberland County Council along with its partners (Sustrans, NHS England, Northumberland National Park, Northumberland Tourism, Active Northumberland, Northumberland Sport, Kielder Water and Forest Park Development Trust, Forestry England and Natural England), comprise the **Northumberland Cycling and Walking Board**.
2. The Board has now refreshed its vision and 'Our Way' (refer to Appendix 1) It sets out Northumberland's ambition to encourage more people of all ages and circumstances to walk and cycle more often. This can play a key role in supporting the economy, creating jobs, improving health and welfare, promoting social inclusion and addressing many of the issues set out in the council's climate change statement of intent.
3. Having declared a climate emergency the council has committed to halving the carbon footprint of the County Council by 2025; and pledged to work with the Government to make Northumberland carbon neutral by 2030. Continuing to invest locally in the pedestrian and cycle networks and facilities is vital if the county is to meet these commitments.
4. 'Our Way' aims to secure long-term and year-on-year investment for walking and cycling in Northumberland as part of an integrated economic regeneration, education and health and wellbeing strategy. The vision and goals are set out below.

OUR WAY - Northumberland's vision for cycling and walking ***"We want more people to walk and cycle more often."***

Goal 1 Sustainable Towns

We will enhance the pedestrian and cycling environment in all our main towns. We will strive to create walking and cycling networks that are joined-up, safe, attractive and accessible to all, making walking and cycling the natural choice for short journeys. We will produce **Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans** (LCWIP) for each of our main towns, these will enable a long-term approach to the development of high quality walking and cycling networks and ensure investment is targeted to support a change in how we travel. Routes will be clearly signed and well integrated with public transport, we will review cycle parking needs in urban areas and work closely with partners to improve facilities at important trip destinations.

Goal 2 Active Place

We will work with communities, businesses and schools to support walking and cycling through established projects such as Go Smarter; supporting **travel planning and marketing** initiatives to increase the uptake of sustainable travel options, reducing private vehicles use and promoting the health related benefits of active travel. We will continue to support Bikeability within **schools** and offer bicycle maintenance and bike leader training to school staff supporting a 'whole school' approach. We will support **cycling as a leisure activity** and encourage families to become more active and support initiatives such as 'mileaday' and health walks. We will work with new

developments, both housing and employment, ensuring developments incorporate cycling and walking infrastructure and facilitate and promote sustainable transport.

Goal 3 Quality Ways

We will enhance the quality and usability of the county's network of recreation and long distance routes, establishing **Northumberland as a national and international destination for outdoor recreation**. We will provide safe walking and cycling routes to allow families to be more active together and provide links to where people want to go, including visitor attractions, country parks and other recreational areas. This will involve comprehensively signing and way-marking the routes; improving particular trouble-spots or gaps, proactively maintaining the prioritised routes and seeking funding to develop new products that allow sustainable use of the network. We will use the development of our routes to stimulate private investment in the development of associated visitor infrastructure.

Goal 4 Inspiration and Support

We will **inspire and support** greater participation in cycling and walking, we will build on the **legacy** of the Tour of Britain 2019 and other events, ensuring local businesses and attractions become positive advocates for walking and cycling. We will raise the profile of walking and cycling, residents and visitors alike will be encouraged to use our comprehensive networks, supported by high quality information services, with local businesses and services geared up to welcome walkers and cyclists.

5. An integrated delivery plan is currently in development which will translate the vision into a programme of short, medium and long term interventions designed to achieve the agreed goals. The emerging framework of activity includes the following:

Short term

The completion of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans for the main towns; using an evidence based process to develop cycling and walking networks, ensuring the authority is well placed for future investment.

- Establishment of cycling network principles to support the development of a pipeline of cycling schemes, ensuring appropriate facilities are provided for a range of different users including recreational purposes, whilst providing a sustainable cycle offer.
- The continuation of the Schools Go Smarter and Bikeability programmes to support and promote sustainable travel for the journey to school.
- A digital marketing campaign to support walking and cycling for leisure and recreational purposes.
- Continued investment in walking and cycling infrastructure through the Local Transport Plan.

Medium to Long Term

The development of walking and cycling networks that support the needs of everyone, including, networks in our main towns that encourage more people to choose to walk or cycle for regular journeys; traffic free, family- friendly circular routes and links to where people want to go (including visitor attractions, country

parks and other recreational areas) and long distance recreational and specialist trails.

- A targeted support programme of marketing, education, engagement and travel planning that will build on the success of the authority's established Go Smarter brand. This would afford residents with easy access to travel information and use proven 'motivators' to achieve long-term behaviour change, particularly targeted at those less likely to participate. A bespoke package for employers would also be developed to increase sustainable travel to work.
- Support for those looking for a specialist cycle offer through developing our specialist trails and network of off-road trails at key destinations, including Kielder Water and Forest.
- A package of measures to support leisure and tourism, including business support, rescue services, support for electric bicycles and incentives to promote accessing visitor attractions by active modes.

6. In terms of resourcing this delivery, walking and cycling infrastructure already gets significant investment through the Local Transport Plan (LTP) with a proposed spend in excess of £1.5m in 2020/21. The Delivery Plan will provide the rationale for an ongoing investment programme within the LTP that maintain a momentum on bringing about a step change in increasing the short journeys made by bike or on foot, and increasing the number of residents who cycle and walk.
7. In addition, the delivery plan will provide a mechanism for ensuring that the Council is in the optimum position to maximise:
 - Section 106 contributions from new development to improve, upgrade and add to the network;
 - Funding from the Department for Transport to support the delivery of the county's LCWIP programme - an ambitious funding ask for an accelerated delivery trail that would position the county as a national exemplar is currently being discussed with Government;
 - Place based funding indicatively earmarked within the emerging Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal which will support the '*Quality Ways*' goal of promoting Northumberland as a national and international destination for outdoor recreation; and
 - Partner contributions and other external funding that is particularly targeted at active travel; reducing emissions and congestion; promoting healthy living; and growing the visitor economy.
8. Current COVID-19 advice encourages people to keep active; apart from those people who are in households with symptoms or who have pre-existing health conditions that put them at increased risk; going for a walk or a bike ride independently can continue and will be encouraged as forms of travel post lock down to reduce the pressure on public transport. This suite of documents will put the authority in a good position to realise a transformative impact for tourism, the economy and health once we've come out of the other side of COVID-19.

Implications

Policy	Encouraging modal shift to sustainable modes of travel is central to the future of the county's quality of life and as such is fully consistent with the Council's Corporate Plan
Finance and value for money	Future investment in the walking and cycling network will require a call on the Local Transport Plan budget. However, any investment will be subject to completion of a business case to demonstrate value for money.
Legal	N/A
Procurement	N/A
Human Resources	N/A
Property	N/A
Equalities	(Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
Risk Assessment	N/A
Crime & Disorder	N/A
Customer Consideration	Any proposed investment in the network will be subject to an ongoing and detailed public consultation exercise.
Carbon reduction	Investment in infrastructure to support sustainable modes of travel will support the ongoing process of carbon reduction.
Health and Wellbeing	Walkers and cyclists have better health and wellbeing, utilise less health and welfare support and are more likely to live well and for longer.
Wards	County wide

Background papers

Appendix 1: Our Way - Walking and Cycling in Northumberland

Report sign off

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Liam Henry
Service Director Finance & Interim S151 Officer	Alison Elsdon
Relevant Executive Director	Juliemma McLoughlin
Chief Executive	Daljit Lally
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cath Homer

Author and Contact Details

Sarah Rowell,
Senior Programme Officer (Transport), sarah.rowell@northumberland.gov.uk