

# Comms238 – Active Travel Strategy and Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans

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## Classification, resources and timescale

<b>Service</b>	Strategic Transport		<b>Committee</b>	Highways and Transport	
<b>Corporate Plan Priority</b>	Green – A great place for people to live, work and visit		<b>Communications Strategy for Residents Priority</b>	Promote corporate plan projects, programmes and priorities	
<b>Subject</b>	Planning transformation				
<b>Comms lead</b>	Chris Gibbs		<b>Type</b>	Strategic programme	
<b>Budget</b>	tbc		<b>Bloom</b>	n/a	
<b>Start</b>	Spring/Summer 2025	<b>Go-live</b>	Summer 2025	<b>End:</b>	Autumn 2025

## Background/narrative

The existing Cycling Strategy 2017-2027 was prepared pre-pandemic, and prior to many policy changes and new guidance which has emerged, including: Gear Change (2020), the Transport Decarbonisation Plan (2021) and Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy 2 (2022), as well as new cycle infrastructure design guidance.

The Cycling Strategy focused on a single mode only, without consideration of the interfaces with walking and wheeling, which have subsequently been emphasised in national policy. The government considers ‘active modes’ (walking, wheeling and cycling) holistically. This direction can be seen in the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy and the expectation for local authorities to develop Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs).

Central government has an objective for 50% of all local journeys in towns and cities to be walked, wheeled or cycled by 2030. Importantly, Active Travel England (ATE) expect local authorities to complete an active travel capability self-assessment each year, which is then assessed by ATE to assign a level to which a local authority is performing, ranging from levels 0 (lowest) to level 4 (highest). Cheshire East is currently classified as level 1 and there is ambition and commitment to progress through the levels. Those authorities performing at a higher level have greater access to funding.

An Active Travel Strategy for Cheshire East has been drafted to share our vision and actions. Alongside this, a suite of seven new Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) have been developed, setting out an evidence-based prioritised network of walking and cycling routes, following guidance set out by the Department for Transport.

The primary purpose of the consultation, subject to approval by Highways and Transport Committee, is to seek the views of stakeholders and residents on the extent to which the public agree with the Active Travel Strategy and actions provided, as well as the extent to which the public agree with the proposed network interventions and prioritisation presented in the LCWIPs. Following the consultation, the feedback will be considered and the Active Travel Strategy and LCWIP plans will be updated and presented to committee for approval.

## Key contacts

- Transport Policy and Accessibility Manager (Cheshire East) – Jenny Marston
- Head of service Strategic Transport and Parking (Cheshire East) – Richard Hibbert
- Director of Transport and Infrastructure (Cheshire East) – Tom Moody
- Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation Co-ordinator – TBC
- Principal Transport Planner (Cheshire East) – Matt Nevin / Clair Visco
- Research Officer (Cheshire East) – Tracy Betty
- Communications Officer (Cheshire East) – Chris Gibbs

## Communications objectives/outcomes

Communications activity tries to change what people:		
Know	➔	Provide or clarify information and/or correct misinformation, misconception – in ways that are accessible and easy to understand
Think	➔	Put information into context of other knowledge and values, helping people reflect on what information means to them
Feel	➔	Nudge emotional response and personal relationship to knowledge
Do	➔	Provoke or call to action

### Communications-specific outcomes and objectives for this plan

- To encourage engagement with the consultation through supporting a better understanding of the key themes of the project
- Set the context for why an Active Travel Strategy and LCWIPs have been progressed – doing this effectively will then lead to increased engagement with the proposed plan.
- Get people talking about the Active Travel Strategy and LCWIPs at the earliest possible stage – getting members on board as ambassadors can help with this process.

# Audiences and stakeholders

**Communications activity can take people on an engagement journey:**

Unaware >>>>    Aware >>>>>    Informed >>>    Interested >>>    Involved >>>    Leadership

**We must consider people's starting attitude and position in relation what we are doing:**

Advocate    Agnostic    Sceptical    Critical    Cynical

*Edit/add new rows as the project requires*

Audience/ stakeholder	Notes
Residents and visitors	Everyone at some point is impacted at least by walking as part of a longer trip. The active travel network interacts with all our lives, so there is a captive audience to appeal to.
Customers	We have customers who are already using the active travel network who will understand the importance of a well-planned and thought-out active travel network and want to share their everyday experiences.
Children and young people	This group is important to engage with as they often rely on walking, wheeling and cycling, and this group are key to making travel choices to continue into adulthood.
Parents and carers	Notify via schools' newsletter and contacting specialist groups.
CEC Staff	As per 'residents and visitors' above.
Councillor Chris Hilliard – walking and cycling member champion	As Cheshire East Council's walking and cycling member champion, Chris is an excellent ambassador for increasing engagement of the consultation.
Councillor Mark Goldsmith and Councillor Liz Braithwaite	As chair and vice chair of the highways and transport committee they are both key stakeholders – they can help to champion the consultation to their committee and may also be able to share details through their own channels.
Highways and transport committee	All committee members will be invested in a positive and thriving active travel network.
All CEC ward councillors/members	Cheshire East Council ward members can act as advocates for both the plan and the consultation.
Town and parish councillors	They can be key stakeholders. The consultation for the active travel strategy impacts on every town and village in Cheshire East and the LCWIPs are targeted for seven key service centres.
Town and parish councils	Town and parish councils themselves can also be strong advocates by helping to publish information at a hyperlocal level.
Businesses (local, regional and national)	Businesses across the borough have an interest in attracting and retaining talent and the efficient movement of goods to support their business. Transport supports business growth.
Schools, colleges, early years providers	Providing a safe active travel network is of particular importance to schools. Being able to access active travel links to education remains a very important aspect of daily life.
MPs	All MPs operating in Cheshire East will be monitoring engagement with the consultation closely. It might be possible for MPs to promote the consultation through their own channels.
Neighbouring Authorities	Could also be advocates especially in towns and villages sharing a border with Cheshire East.

Audience/ stakeholder	Notes
Those with protected characteristics / organisations for people with specialist transport needs (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation)	It is important to gain feedback and input from those with protected characteristics to understand their views in relation to the Active Travel Strategy and LCWIPs and update the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA).
Cycle reps and groups	It is important to gain feedback and input from those with an interest in cycling.

## Tactics/approach

*How we are going to achieve the communications objectives/outcomes*

- Issue press releases, promoted also via social media to outline why there is a new Active Travel Strategy and new LCWIPs, and what the next steps will be.
- Press releases/social media must generate interest in the topic to encourage participation in the public consultation.
- Briefings to key stakeholders in advance of consultation going live and during the first week of consultation.
- Questionnaire.
- Webpage.
- Brochure.
- Engagement with key stakeholders.

## Products/types of activity

*Examples of what we are going to do*

- Press releases prior to and during the public consultation to encourage uptake.
- Social media posts to encourage participation in the public consultation.
- Questionnaire.
- Webpage information and link to questionnaire.
- Contact stakeholder list which should include umbrella organisations for those with specialist transport needs and transport interest groups.
- Briefings with other key stakeholders enabling them through various different channels such as newsletters and member briefings.

## Key messages

*The key messages and lines to take*

- To support an ambition to increase active travel uptake, we must actively develop plans and deliver infrastructure that supports this. This includes improving active travel routes to improve connectivity



across the local authority. The Active Travel Strategy outlines the role walking, wheeling and cycling will play in delivering a transport network that promotes active travel.

- Opportunity for residents to input on the draft vision and themes of the Active Travel Strategy and the extent to which there is support of the LCWIP routes in the towns of:
  - Alsager
  - Handforth
  - Knutsford
  - Nantwich
  - Middlewich
  - Poynton
  - Sandbach
  
- Following consultation, it is envisaged amendments will be made where appropriate and documents will follow the approval process for adoption.
- The LCWIPs are not funded through to delivery, and therefore the Active Travel Strategy and the LCWIPs will form the basis for future funding bids, when opportunities arise.

## Action plan and timeline

#	Date	Time	Activity/Event	Comms lead	Audience(s)	Channel	Service	Ctte	Subject	Notes
1	Early June	tbc	Director/exec director to brief leader/deputy leader on plans	tbc	Political leadership	Call/email	Transport	H+T	Awareness of campaign	Project team to establish who will do this briefing
2	Early June	tbc	Director/exec director to brief committee chair and vice chair	tbc	Key committee members	Call/email	Transport	H+T	Awareness of campaign	Project team to establish who will do this briefing
3	19 June 2025	tbc	Highways and Transport Committee	JM/PG	Committee members	Highways and Transport Committee	Transport	H+T	Committee paper	
4	20-25 June	tbc	Wider Councillor briefings	tbc	Appropriate councillors	Call/email	Transport	H+T	Information on consultation material	Preferable date for this wider briefing would be Friday 20 June as that will allow some space before the following week for a further update to be included in a members briefing
5	26 June	tbc	Members' briefing	CG	CEC councillors	Members' briefing	Transport	H+T	Information on consultation material	This is an email which is issued fortnightly
6	May	tbc	Commission support for consultation	JM/PG	n/a	n/a	Transport	H+T	n/a	
7	Late May / early June	tbc	Draft all consultation materials	tbc	Project team	Materials	Transport	H+T	Developing the campaign	Brochure, questionnaire, web page text, poster, press release, social media posts
8	Mid/late June	tbc	Comments back on materials and finalisation	tbc	Project team	Physical materials	Transport	H+T	Developing the campaign	May need to organise a meeting around this time to feedback any comments in a timely manner
9	Late June	tbc	Commit all assets to print	tbc	Project team	Physical assets	Transport	H+T	Campaign launch	Assets to be delivered to Delamere House, Crewe unless otherwise stated
10	Early July	tbc	Press release to promote consultation start date	tbc	General public	Media	Transport	H+T	What the consultation is about and how to participate	
11	Early July	tbc	Social media post regarding public consultation start date	tbc	General public	Social Media platforms	Transport	H+T	What the consultation is about and how to participate	Naturally we will put out a social media post when the consultation goes live but we also need reminder posts once this has happened.
12	Early July	tbc	Online publication regarding public consultation start date	tbc	General public	Online (council webpage)	Transport	H+T	What the consultation is about and how to participate	Council website to be the primary source for providing this information.
13	Start of July	tbc	Public consultation has launched	tbc	General public	Physical assets / online	Transport	H+T	Campaign Launch	Assets to be distributed from Crewe to locations across Cheshire East prior launch of the consultation
14	Start of July	tbc	Social media posts to announce launch of consultation	tbc	General public	Social media platforms	Transport	H&T	Reminder that the consultation is open	This is complementing the messages that already exist with all the physical assets
15	Late July	tbc	Social media posts at half way stage to further encourage participation	tbc	General public	Social media platforms	Transport	H&T	Reminder that the consultation is open	
16	August	tbc	Public consultation has closed	tbc	General public	Online	Transport	H+T	Outline next steps	All responses will now be reviewed is the type of language that will be used
17	September	tbc	CEC-prepared report summarising consultation feedback and analysis	tbc	General public	Internal	Transport	H+T	Outcomes and next steps	
18	tbc	tbc	Media release/social media to promote outcome of the consultation	tbc	General public and stakeholders	Website, media release & social media	Transport	H+T	Outcomes and next steps	

## Evaluation, performance, reporting

How are we going to demonstrate how well we have delivered the communications objectives and outcomes?

- Number of detailed email responses received (where respondents have added information that they felt they were unable to include within the survey).
- Report on media pickup indicating what audiences are being reached (this will be measured through media monitoring within the communications team).
- Number of visits to the scheme web page and the number of people linking through to the Smart Survey following on from that initial visit - any opening of the survey will contribute towards engagement figures (partial completion of the surveys is an example of this).

# Appendix 1: Communications products

Record/link to final versions of media releases, statements and other products.

TBC

## **Appendix 2: Notable coverage**

List press, online, broadcast and social coverage.

TBC