

Notts County Council Rights of Way Management Plan Consultation 2018: Response from Pedals (Nottingham Cycling Campaign)

Although our work as a cycle campaign group focuses mainly on the urban areas of Greater Nottingham we are also very keen both to see cycling promoted widely, because of its very strong environmental and health attributes, and also to achieve improved and more coherent links between rural and urban areas, particularly good quality and well-maintained traffic-free paths, with safe road crossings, to help attract a wide range of users, including less experienced and confident cyclists and people who are new to cycling and likely to be most intimidated by cycling on routes shared with motor traffic.

Pedals therefore much welcomes the Rights of Way Management Plan as the overarching focus for the protection, creation and enhancement of countryside access in Nottinghamshire and the role of the County Council continuing to develop and manage this countryside network for all, enabling opportunities for the widest possible type and number of users contributing to Nottinghamshire's economy, health, social well-being and environment.

To start with in our response we would like to comment on some of 6 key aims;

To improve access to the network for all by adopting the principle of the least restrictive option (and section 4.10)

We strongly endorse this aim since any kind of barriers, especially those of the A-frame and K-frame type, are very off-putting for cyclists (as well as other groups like tricycles, pushchair and wheelchair users as well as bikes with child trailers on the back), particularly when there are several of them close together. We are therefore very keen to see these barriers removed, or at least modified, wherever possible, and not just to see no new ones installed. For further information on this see Appendix A which includes the Policy on off-road path barriers which Pedals adopted in 2017 and which can be found at: <http://pedals.org.uk/policy-on-the-use-of-barriers/>

To improve the safety and connectivity of the metalled road network with the rights of way network

Cyclists often use a combination of roads and off-road paths for their journeys, especially for recreation and much appreciate coherent safe and well-signed routes, with as much priority as possible over motorised travel.

To increase awareness of accessing the countryside and the understanding of the wider benefits arising from its use, such as leading an active and healthy lifestyle, and making a positive contribution to the local economy.

With the recent further publicity about the dangers of increased obesity and the role of active travel in helping to combat this and a range of other conditions such as coronary heart disease and Type 2 Diabetes, the role of cycling and walking, both as an everyday active means of travel and as a form of regular recreation have become all the more important. We also welcome the recognition of this in the recently revised County Health and Wellbeing Strategy. (paras 3.5.2 and 3.5.3)

To enhance and increase community involvement in managing and improving the network, where resources allow.

We recognise the increasing difficulties in managing and improving the network arising from financial cutbacks but still think that this should be mainly up to the County Council as local Highway Authority, working in close partnerships with other organisations. This could be helped by clearer and better publicised outlets, of various kinds, for reporting problems and suggesting improvements.

Other comments

Tapping a wider range of resources for rights of way improvements (para 4.6.4)

At a time of greatly increased local authority financial cutbacks it is very important that every effort is made to harness contributions for rights of way improvements from other sources, including section 106 developer contributions, the Canal and River Trust, and Highways England funding in the case of schemes related to trunk roads, etc. Among the possible projects where HE funding will be particularly important is the Pedals proposal to provide a much safer route across the A52 (Gamston-Lings Bar road) between Tollerton and Edwalton, including the upgrading of existing rights of way on both sides of the A52. This would be of great value in the wider context of encouraging more walking and cycling between the existing (West Bridgford and Nottingham) urban area and the new housing areas to be developed in the Tollerton-Bassingfield areas, as well as providing an improved route to serve vulnerable road users from villages further out.

The use of developer contributions (section 106 funds) for path improvements related to major new housing areas is also very important, not just in the Tollerton-Bassingfield areas but also in the Sharp Hill-Edwalton area and in the major new housing development which recently got planning consent for Fairham Pastures, south of Clifton. This will also need improved links to and from nearby villages such as Gotham and Ruddington as well as to routes within Clifton, Wilford and elsewhere in Nottingham City. Paths that connect across council boundaries must include consistent signing, including consistent use of destination and symbols on destination signs. Having specific destinations makes the paths that much more useful than when they just state 'public footpath' or 'public bridleway', etc.

In the Sharp Hill-Edwalton area upgrading of the subway under the A52 south of Sharp Hill (a designated public footpath but with plenty of room for upgrading to shared use) is of particular importance, not just in terms of the new housing to the north of the A52 and around the A606 (Melton Road) but also to and from Ruddington to the south, including Ruddington village and Country Park. This needs close collaboration between the County and Borough Councils and Highways England, including attention to upgrading the approach paths / routes on both sides of the A52.

With resources now being often increasingly limited it seems to us to make sense not only to maximise the use of such other funding sources but also to concentrate resources for improvements on paths in the vicinity of the main urban areas, particularly where major new housing development are proposed, because these are likely to have higher levels of usage and levels that are likely to grow considerably if improvements are made.

The need for this wider harnessing of funds does not seem to be mentioned much in the draft Plan which also does not mention the new DfT system of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs), introduced in 2017, which aims, in close consultation with a variety of stakeholders including LEPs (such as D2N2), Local Access Forums and User Groups, to produce a 30-year vision, a framework of an aspirational network, with short term priorities, and then used as a basis for seeking to obtain finance.

In this area very important opportunity to get funding for a scheme that could do much to improve the connectivity of the rights of way network in Nottinghamshire with that in Derbyshire and Leicestershire

is offered by the plans for the extension of the HS2 railway from Birmingham to Leeds, particularly the possibility of providing a shared path on the new HS2 bridge to be built between Redhill / Thrumpton in Nottinghamshire, and Cranfleet Lock / Long Eaton in Derbyshire, This is a scheme which Pedals strongly supports, particularly as it would connect with several other important cycling and walking routes on both side of the Trent, including Routes 6, 15 and 67 of the Sustrans National Cycle Network, the Trent Valley Way and the Erewash Valley Trail.

Below, in Appendix B, are the detailed comments which Pedals made in 2014 with regard to the HS2 plans in this area, at a time when the DfT were planning to include an HS2 cycleway within a 5km corridor alongside it. Although this wider project was dropped by the DfT in 2018, we still think that the provision of a shared path on the new HS2 bridge over the Trent would in itself be a must useful addition to the local network, with consequent major health and environmental benefits.

Surfaces on Bridleways (paras 4.4.13, 4.4.14, 4.6.8, 6.6)

While we appreciate that the type of surface used on bridleways, and other multi-user paths, must take account of different user needs and preferences and that this means that tarmac will often not be suitable, we do think it important that bridleways, being accessible by pedal cyclists as well as walkers and horseriders, must have a minimum level of hard and well-drained surface or they may well not be rideable by most cyclists (other than mountain bikers), at least during the winter when it can be very hard on such paths to remain relatively clean. This means that using the paths is much less enjoyable, especially if the usable width is also inadequate.

An example is the stretch of bridleway immediately west of the Rushcliffe / City of Nottingham boundary between Barton Fabis and Clifton Woods which is often too muddy to be usable in wet periods. It needs a drainage channel on the south side of the path to catch water coming downhill and this work needs to be coordinated with the stretch of path in the City immediately to the east which appears to suffer a similar problem, although perhaps to a lesser extent.

Circular routes (4.13.1)

We are glad to see this acknowledgement of the importance of circular routes, the popularity of which was also evident in the most recent responses to Nottingham City Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan. The opening up of more circular routes options in the River Trent area of Greater Nottingham, along with improving and extending riverside paths on both banks of the Trent, is one of the main justifications for the proposed new foot-cycle bridge between Lady Bay and Trent Basin which Pedals is pursuing with several other local organisations, working closely with the County and City Councils, and Sustrans, and the need for which received the support of the Leader of Nottingham City Council, Cllr Jon Collins, in November 2017. Work is now in progress on the finalisation of the exact site revised north and south landings, the completion of our feasibility study, and stepping up the search for sources of funding.

On the south bank of the Trent, as well as connecting to the Trent Valley Way and Route 15 of the Sustrans National Cycle Network, and many local routes, this bridge would also connect both to many new housing areas and important leisure attractions. As well as the NFFC City Ground, and Trent Bridge Cricket Ground these include Holme Pierrepont Country Park and Water Sports Centre, the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust Skylarks Nature Reserve, the Grantham Canal towpath and the new Cotgrave Greenway, due for completion in April 2018. With growing use of ebikes this facility could encourage longer trips, both for leisure and commuting, including to and from Gedling Country Park, especially if the current plans for access improvements are pursued. Use of bikes in hillier area is likely to be that much easier and therefore more popular.

Hugh McClintock for Pedals,
3 April 2018

Appendix A:

Pedals Policy on the Use of Barriers, agreed at the Pedals meeting on 20 March 2017

All forms of barrier are likely to restrict or prevent accessibility for some legitimate user of the path and should only be used when the need for them has been proven based on good evidence and not if the risk is perceived.

Access control measures should not obstruct or to cause the rider any inconvenience or difficulty. Riders should not have to dismount or stop to manoeuvre whilst still astride the cycle.

Barriers should be used as a last resort when there is no other way to resolve a proved difficulty.

Before any access control is installed, cyclists and other users of the path should be consulted.

Should some form of access control has been proved to be necessary, the following criteria should be considered:

- Cyclists should be able to cycle through and not have to dismount
- Should not prevent cycles or any form of trailer to pass through
- Should allow heavily laden cycles to pass through i.e. those with full panniers
- Should allow trikes and recumbents to pass through
- Should allow adapted cycles to pass through
- Should not restrict access to older and disabled cyclists

On shared paths it may be necessary to set barriers to allow wheelchairs and mobility scooters through.

Emergency and maintenance vehicles should have access.

Barriers should be very visible, in a contrasting colour/s to their background, and ideally, well lit. This is especially important as most paths are also used by people with disabilities including poor vision.

Types of Barrier

- Use of sight line either natural or engineered
- Single bollard
- Group of bollards
- Gate (Radar key access may be needed for users with wheelchairs)
- K frame set to allow all types of cycles through
- A frame

Using Barriers

Bollards are the preferred form of access control. A single one should be adequate to deter cars.

Other forms of access control such as A-frames and staggered barriers, are likely to interfere with many types of cycle, so should be used with caution.

Introduction

Pedals (Nottingham Cycling Campaign) welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation and the recent news from the DfT of the appointment of consultants to carry out a feasibility study of the building of a cycleway in the corridor of the HS2 routes.

While in principle welcoming the proposed long distance route (SS2) we would like to emphasise the importance of such a route complementing existing regional and local routes and not competing with them or resulting in the loss of reduced quality of any such routes. Indeed great care should be taken in the detailed design, layout and landscaping of the alignment of HS2 and SS2 to ensure that connections in existing routes are improved, e.g. with safe and convenient crossing points. It will be much harder to do this satisfactorily if this is considered only as an afterthought rather than as an integral part of the whole new railway scheme.

Similarly we would like to emphasise the importance of good local connectivity and the need for the detailed alignment of the SS2 route to help extend local cycle networks and improve their quality, where substandard, to help provide safe connections to a variety of important local destinations and facilities in the vicinity of the route and contribute to wider transport integration.

Detailed comments

In the proposed HS2 route corridor in the East Midlands area, on the West Midlands to Leeds extension route, our main area of interest, close to the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire county boundary, north of the M1, and south of Hucknall, it will be particularly important for the proposed HS2 and SS2 alignment to have regard to these routes in particular:-

- The Erewash Valley Trail (in the Long Eaton – Sandiacre areas).
(<http://www.broxtowe.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=20643&p=0>) This was opened in 2011, implemented in a partnership between several organisations including Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire County Councils, Broxtowe and Erewash Borough Councils, the Notts and Derbs Wildlife Trusts, the Environment Agency, and the former British Waterways Trust. It included greatly improved canal towpath surfaces on the Erewash Canal and improved links to the Nutbrook Trail, southwest and west of Ilkeston, and part of Sustrans National Cycle Network Route 67.
It also connects to the 9 mile Big Track canal- and riverside path route on the south side of Nottingham developed and upgraded over the last ten years by Nottingham City Council, Nottinghamshire County Council, and The Big Wheel (Greater Nottingham Transport Partnership) with support from other partners including the former British Waterways:
<http://www.thebigwheel.org.uk/for-you/cycling/maps-routes/the-big-track>
- Sustrans National Cycle Network Route 67 (Long Eaton – Ilkeston – Nutbrook Trail area) (as well as further north, between Chesterfield and the Rother Valley Country Park)
- Sustrans National Cycle Network Route 6 (Nottingham-Long Eaton-Derby section). Route 6 is an important national route connecting Inverness with Dover, as well as being the main NCN Route in the Greater Nottingham area.
- Sustrans National Cycle Network Route 15 (Nottingham – East Midlands Airport section including the new provision being included in the A453 widening scheme between the M1 and Clifton, etc. Route 15 already exists across parts of South Nottinghamshire south of the Trent and is now being further extended.
- The various bridleway links in the Strelley area on the west side of Nottingham and their importance as non-motorised links between the west side of Nottingham and the Erewash Valley.

- The multi-user path on the north-west side of Nottingham, in Broxtowe Borough, between Hempshill Vale (Low Wood Road (on the Nottingham City / Broxtowe Borough boundary) and Watnall etc., part of a longstanding proposed Sustrans route via the Bennerley Viaduct and Ilkeston etc, to Derby. This path follows under the M1 via a disused railway bridge and Pedals and Sustrans are also very keen to see this facility safeguarded in the proposals for a further NET extension line (Phase 3) from the current NET Phase 1 terminal site at Phoenix Park towards Kimberley and Eastwood, with improved connections in the north of Broxtowe Borough including to and from the northern part of the Erewash Valley Trail (towards Langley Mill etc).
- Other parts of the Greater Nottingham Cycle Network, especially in the Toton, Chilwell and Beeston areas), existing and proposed and including paths to be developed and / or upgraded in association with the current NET (Nottingham Express Transit) tram extension plans, due for completion in late 2014. (see cycle map of Nottingham City and some surrounding areas downloadable at: <http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/Cycling>)

We see cycle connectivity to the proposed Toton station (East Midlands Hub) as vital, not only for passengers travelling onwards but also for people employed and living in the vicinity. To this end we would hope to see the following major links put in place, all clearly signed with signage designed to be consistent with other local cycle route signs in Greater Nottingham, now being reviewed, and including the signs associated with cycle facilities related to the two new NET extension lines.

- From Toton park and ride, parallel with the proposed tram route to HS2. This would connect Beeston, Chilwell, parts of Stapleford and the proposed housing developments at Toton.
- From Stapleford via Bessels Lane to link in with the Erewash Valley trail, connect Sandiacre, Stapleford and link to the old Derby Road. This could also connect new housing proposed on the Stanton Ironworks site.
- To Long Eaton (connection to Sustrans NCN Route 6). There is a public footpath over the footbridge at present and there may be proposals for a tram route /road. We would want cycling provision built into this.
- To Toton estate thus connecting significant residential areas not only to the HS2 hub but to all the other routes as well.
- Cycle path across the Trent on an adjacent way to the High Speed rail, or if not practical a way to be investigated utilising one of the existing rail crossings, e.g. cantilevered on the side of the Midland Main Line bridge east of Trent Lock and with possible connections to routes on the south side of the Trent and in the A453 corridor, including Sustrans NCN Route 15.

We would hope for substantial cycle storage facilities, changing rooms, lockers, showers and cycle hire at the station, perhaps including a further hub in the growing Citycard cycles scheme developed since 2012 by Nottingham City Council (www.citycardcycles.co.uk) and now being extended into adjoining local authority areas, to provide both hire bikes and secure parking for people to leave their own bikes.

Pedals would welcome the opportunity, in cooperation with other local cycling groups, local authorities and other interested organisations, to discuss these issues in more detail and how best to ensure that the detailed final HS2 and SS2 proposals contribute as much as possible to enhancing the quality and quantity of local cycle routes in the vicinity and the wider Nottingham and Derby areas.