LCWIP Consultation Summary Document

Introduction

Northumberland's vision, Our Way, sets out Northumberland's ambition for more people of all ages and circumstances to walk and cycle more often and make active travel the natural choice for short journeys. This will largely focus on our main towns where we will strive to create walking and cycling networks that are joined-up, safe, attractive and accessible to all.

To support this step change we have been developing Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) for our 12 main towns (Alnwick, Amble, Ashington, Bedlington, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Blyth, Cramlington, Haltwhistle, Hexham, Morpeth, Ponteland, Prudhoe). These plans represent the long-term blueprints by which we'll target our investment to support a fundamental behaviour change to how we travel. Adopting this evidence-led approach puts us in the best position to achieve the modal shift towards more active and environmentally-friendly forms of travel whilst also securing best value for money.

Proposed improvements will include a mixture of physical segregation to protect pedestrians and cyclists from motor vehicles, traffic calming and road safety measures to make our neighbourhoods more liveable. Public realm and footway improvements will make public spaces more attractive, improve access for people with a disability and support greater numbers to walk and cycle.

Consultation Outline

As part of the development of the LCWIPs, between7th March and 15th April 2022 we carried out a consultation to seek the views of key stakeholders, including residents, businesses and town/parish councils on the proposed walking and cycling networks. The purpose of this was to determine whether the plans that are emerging, adequately serve the needs of the local community in which they are meant to serve and if they are supported in general by those completing the consultation. The consultation also gave the opportunity to identify any gaps in the network. At this stage, the purpose of the consultation was to seek views on the general alignment of the proposed walking and cycling routes, rather than the detailed design of the infrastructure itself. We received 484 responses to this consultation.

Existing Travel Habits

A key element of the survey was to understand how people travel at present; therefore, respondents were asked to suggest how often they used each mode of transport. The table below shows responses for how often respondents used each mode (excluding cycling and walking).

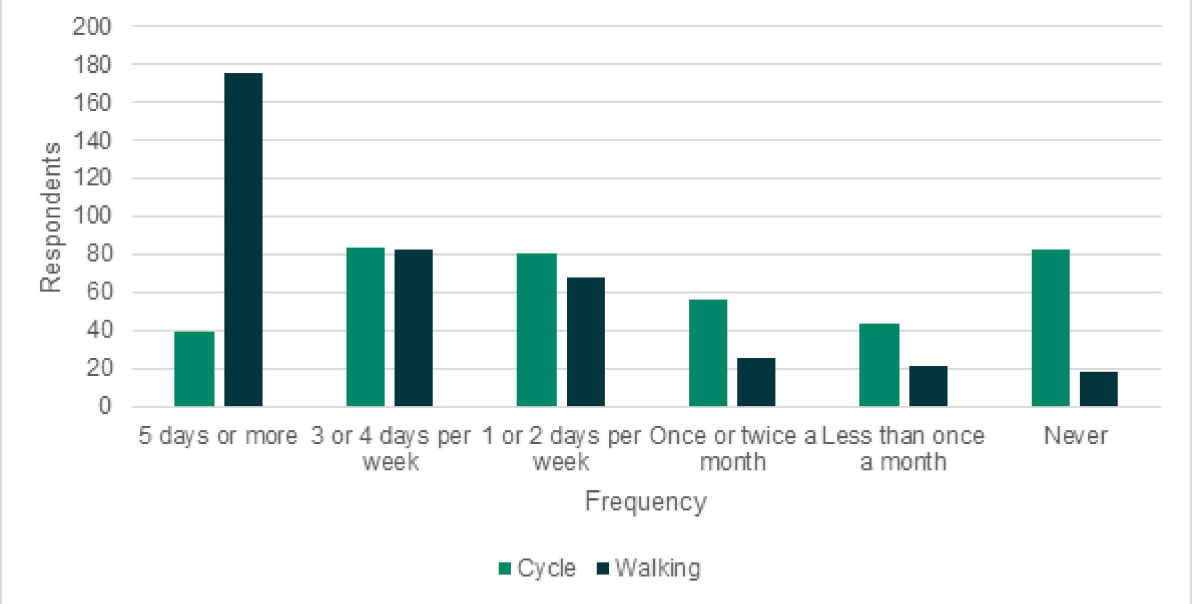
How often do you use each mode? (Days per week)

Travel use	Car - driver	Car - Passenger	Bus	Metro	Rail	Taxi	Motorcycle
5 or more	123	17	1	1	1	0	39
3 or 4	126	26	9	1	1	2	84
1 or 2	109	112	23	3	19	4	80
Once or twice a month	23	95	57	24	64	19	56
<once a month	2	54	139	137	195	147	44
Never	23	29	110	163	71	163	83

Private vehicles (car driver or passenger and motorcycle) were identified as the most well used modes for respondents' existing travel patterns. The level of public transport use reported by respondents was significantly lower, with the majority of people only using bus or rail less than once a month.

The figure below illustrates respondent's existing travel patterns by bicycle or walking (for ten minutes or more of a journey).

How often do you cycle or walk (for 10 minutes of your journey)



Results show that while many respondents currently walk as part of the journeys, there is a limited number of people who currently cycle five or more days per week, with the majority of respondents cycling between 1-4 days per week or never at all.

In order to better understand why people are making their journeys (trip purpose), the survey included questions to establish the nature of the trips as represented below:

Travel frequency per trip type (days per week)

Travel use		5 or more	3 or 4	1 or 2	Once or twice per month	<once per month	Never
Work	Cycle	11	16	29	19	28	271
	Walk	25	21	27	26	24	240
Education	Cycle	1	3	1	0	4	322
	Walk	7	3	7	2	3	308
Personal Business	Cycle	1	14	33	57	56	202
	Walk	19	37	64	102	57	98
Food Shopping	Cycle	3	10	39	33	54	229
	Walk	26	41	121	63	40	97
Non-Food Shopping	Cycle	2	5	17	48	67	229
	Walk	19	27	87	96	62	88
Leisure	Cycle	10	26	33	62	72	172
	Walk	32	36	104	100	58	55
Recreational	Cycle	25	71	93	69	53	87
	Walk	152	85	81	43	24	19

People who responded to this question largely utilised cycling as a means of travel for recreational and leisure trips. However, it is noted that the quantity of people cycling for these purposes more than three days a week are limited. In addition to this, there were a higher proportion of people who walk more than three days a week across all journey purposes.

LCWIP Principles

The survey included questions relating to the LCWIP principles and each of the towns considered in the public consultation. LCWIP principles are summarised below.

LCWIP Principle 1 - Our walking and cycling vision. We want to ensure that residents and visitors in Northumberland can enjoy walking and cycling, whether for commuting, the journey to school or for leisure purposes. To support Goal 1, Sustainable Towns, in the Our Way Vision, we will enhance the pedestrian and cycling environment in our main towns. We believe that walking and cycling infrastructure improvements will enable residents to become healthier by living more active lifestyles and supporting more active forms of transport will reduce car use and will result in reduced congestion, carbon emissions and improve local air quality.

LCWIP Principle 2 – Evidence-based approach to walking and cycling network planning.

We have adopted an evidence-led approach to developing the walking and cycling networks, this will put us in the best position to support more people to walk and cycle. The evidence base that supports a town Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) includes:

- The current transport network of the town;

- Current travel to work patterns
- Main trip generators and attractors (including train and bus stations);
- Travel to school data;
- Road traffic accident data;
- Socio-economic data, including car ownership;
- Town specific examination of the routes most likely to increase levels of walking and cycling.

LCWIP Principle 3 - Geographical extent of LCWIPs. Northumberland's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) focus on each of the main towns in the county (Alnwick, Amble, Ashington, Bedlington, Berwick Upon Tweed, Blyth, Cramlington, Haltwhistle, Hexham, Morpeth, Ponteland, Prudhoe). This will ensure that key employment sites, travel to work areas, transport interchanges and significant new housing developments are considered as part of the LCWIP process. It is also believed that our main towns have the greatest potential for growing cycling and walking trips.

LCWIP Principle 4 - Proposed improvements. Proposed infrastructure improvements vary from town to town and will be designed to optimise usability, safety and suit the environment using the latest design standards focussing on the need of the user and the opportunity to improve our built environments.

We will strive to adhere to national design guidelines, set out in the Department for Transport Local Transport Note 1/20 July 2020. Following this design guidance will ensure networks and routes are coherent, direct, safe, comfortable and attractive. Inclusive design and accessibility will run through all designs, ensuring the infrastructure is accessible to all and the needs of vulnerable pedestrians and local people are considered.

LCWIP Principle 5 - Priority corridors. We have used data to identify priority walking and cycling 'corridors' in each of the main towns. For each main town, we have identified 3 cycling corridors and 2 walking corridors. A walking or cycling 'corridor' essentially shows the proposed area the walking or cycle route will cover; however, the exact alignment will be decided following further investigations and consultation. These identified priority corridors are where we will initially focus our investment.

The identified walking and cycling corridors across the 12 main towns have been prioritised using aspects that are important to us as a county, these are:

1. Forecast increase in walking and cycling trips and reduction and car usage.
2. Population who directly benefit from the proposed corridor.
3. The proposal will improve road safety or make the current available infrastructure compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act.
4. The proposed corridor serves a school or major employment area/site.
5. The proposed corridor provides a link that is important for tourism.
6. The proposed corridor serves an area of deprivation.
7. The proposed corridor serves an area of low car ownership.
8. The proposed corridor provides improved transport connections.
9. The cost of construction and maintenance of the proposed corridor.
10. The proximity of the proposed corridor to a major development site.
11. Economic appraisal of the proposed corridor.

Respondents were asked whether or not they agree with these principles. In total, 349 people responded to this question; responses are summarised below.

Do you Agree with the LCWIP Principles?

Response	No. Responses
Yes	301
No	48

301 people who responded to this question agreed with the LCWIP principles by which the town LCWIPs have been developed. Of those that did not agree, reasons given are summarised below:

- The main reason for disagreeing with the LCWIP principles was due to a lack of focus of town-to-town trips, and more of a focus on town centre trips for walking and cycling. Many people highlighted that for the most part, the trips they make are between towns, and while investment in town centre infrastructure would be welcomed, it was felt that this does not sufficiently support travel between towns and smaller villages in more rural areas;
- Many respondents highlighted that while the focus on delivering dedicated walking and cycling infrastructure was welcomed, there seems to be a lack of focus on investment in supporting infrastructure or initiatives, such as cycle training and cycle parking at main points on the network i.e. railway and bus stations, allowing for multimodal trips to be completed by residents;
- The proposed corridors should not be limited to five corridors (walking and cycling) as this does not facilitate trips across the wider communities in Northumberland. It was however acknowledged that there is a need to focus investment somewhere initially;
- A number of responses highlighted a lack of consideration for equestrians. While the LCWIPs consider walkers and cyclists, there is a feeling that the principles and strategy in place should consider wider non-motorised users also. They cited that it is often the case that equestrians are forgotten about when developing new infrastructure for non-highway users;
- The LCWIP principles do not consider inequalities across Northumberland. Additionally, areas for investment should not be chosen on the size of the towns alone and towns which have greater tourist potential (i.e. areas along the coast) should also be considered in the principles;
- Several people highlighted that the principles do not consider the impact that reallocating road space for walkers and cyclists would have on highway users – consideration of delay, queuing and congestion impacts should be included as part of the principles; and
- The proposals and the LCWIP principles by which they are shaped should include SMART objectives to ensure that the delivery of the schemes is measurable in terms of desired outputs.

However, based on the number of positive responses received, there was strong support for the principles behind the formation of the LCWIPs .

Town pages

Each of the 12 main towns in Northumberland were represented on the LCWIP consultation, these pages outlined the proposed walking and cycling networks for the town along with the proposed priority corridors (the walking and cycling corridors where we propose to initially target investment in that town). Information was collected on both the proposed networks and priority corridor for the town and any particular problems for pedestrians and cyclists within that town.

Overall, the proposals presented as part of the consultation of the LCWIPs for each of the towns was relatively well received by those who took part. The proportion of support for each of the towns is presented in the table below:

Overall Support for Proposals

	Completely support	Partially support	Neither for or against	Partially oppose	Completely oppose
Alnwick	81%	10%	8%	2%	0%
Amble	61%	28%	11%	0%	0%
Ashington	63%	30%	3%	0%	3%
Bedlington	63%	21%	13%	3%	0%
Berwick	53%	41%	6%	0%	0%
Blyth	57%	20%	9%	9%	6%
Cramlington	58%	25%	8%	4%	4%
Haltwhistle	40%	40%	5%	5%	10%
Hexham	56%	27%	8%	6%	3%
Morpeth	56%	33%	5%	4%	2%
Ponteland	46%	33%	17%	4%	0%
Prudhoe	70%	10%	10%	5%	5%

All towns, with the exception of Haltwhistle, received over 50% of complete support from those who took part in the consultation survey and all of the towns received over 70% support (complete or partial support). However, while the majority of respondents to the survey supported the proposals, Haltwhistle received >10% complete opposition to the plans set out in the consultation.

Future Design Considerations

While the overall response to the plans set out in the consultation was positive, there were several themes highlighted in a number of responses across almost all towns. These responses will be considered when further developing the proposed priority corridors into schemes:

The need to consider towns/villages away from town centres

Although there is a need to provide improved infrastructure in the centre of many towns, many respondents highlighted that for the schemes to have a meaningful impact on the uptake of active modes (particularly cycling), there is a need to connect to smaller towns and villages away from those considered in the LCWIPs. As the towns considered in the LCWIPs are often the main employment areas for people in peripheral areas, connections between each should be considered.

Upgrade to existing NCN routes

Many people who responded to the online survey referenced the need to utilise / upgrade existing routes on the NCN to help improve connectivity within and between towns. There are a number of NCN routes which span across the county, and many residents felt that upgrading existing routes would encourage a shift towards active modes – this was mentioned many times in regard to the NCN 72 which routes along the River Tyne via Hexham and could provide a key connection with Newcastle, a key economic centre for Northumberland towns and villages within relatively close proximity to the city.

Connect to Railway Stations

Although the consultation does not consider investment in the public transport / railway system itself, a number of respondents highlighted the need to connect the proposed routes with existing and potential future railway stations. Both Hexham and Bedlington stations were referenced by residents of the towns respectively, relating to the potential in reducing private vehicle usage by connecting cycle routes to railway stations, to allow people multi-modal trips on sustainable transport that are efficient, safe and attractive. In addition to the comments received, by connecting with railway stations in the towns, this offers an opportunity for residents to connect with further employment and education opportunities (outside of an average cycle trip distance).

Next Steps

The responses collected as part of the consultation, will allow the council to further develop the LCWIP proposals and strategy. This stage of the process has improved local understanding, from those who live and work in the towns across Northumberland. This consultation will shape the delivery plan of proposals for when an appropriate funding stream becomes available.

As highlighted in this report, this consultation presents an early stage in the development of the schemes and as designs mature, further, more detailed consultation will be undertaken. This gives residents more opportunity to influence the final schemes. Gaining local support for the infrastructure investment and encouraging local public engagement, should increase uptake of active travel as a main mode of transport.