

Tavistock Active Travel Roundtable - 6 June 2020

Attendees

Cllr Debo Sellis – Devon County Council (Tavistock)
Cllr Philip Sanders – Devon County Council (Yelverton and Rural)
Cllr Andy Coulson – West Devon Borough Council
Cllr Neil Jory – West Devon Borough Council
Cllr Anne Johnson – Mayor of Tavistock
Cllr Ursula Mann – Tavistock Town Council
Hannah Clark – Devon County Council (Senior Transport Planning Officer)
Lucy Martin – Devon County Council (Transport Planning Officer)
Phil Townsend – Devon County Council (Principal Highway Development Management Officer)
Ros Mills – Devon County Council (Public Rights of Way Team Manager)
Peter Guy – Devon County Council (Public Rights of Way Warden)
John Fewings – Devon County Council (Neighbourhood Highway Manager)
Tom Lee - Devon County Council (Neighbourhood Highway Officer)
Steve Mullineaux – South West Devon
Rob Sekula - South West Devon
Gina Small – South West Devon (Urban Fringe Manager)
Kit Harbottle – Transition Tavistock
Kate Royston – Transition Tavistock

Agenda

- 1. Introductions and welcome - Cllr Sellis**
- 2. Strategic Approach to Active Travel– Hannah Clark**

Strategy Documents

- **Transport Infrastructure Plan** details our major priority schemes
- **Multi-Use Trail Strategy (MUTS)** outlines the strategic approach to active travel opportunities, 3 key aims: promoting Exeter, Newton Abbot and Barnstaple's cycle networks, investing in leisure routes and enabling the delivery of cycle aspirations in market/coastal towns. This means linking infrastructure to development to create attractive walking/cycling environments, and helping communities develop plans.
- A revised priority list was taken to DCC's Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee. This provides a subset of the MUTS to be focused on, including investigation into Yelverton to Roborough.

Funding Constraints

Only guaranteed source of funding is from the Local Transport Plan, since 2010 this has been cut from £10m per year to £3.6m (for all transport schemes across the county).

Government funding focused on projects that boost economic growth, e.g. major highway improvements unlocking housing/jobs e.g. Local Pinchpoint Fund, Regional Growth Fund, Growth and Housing Fund, Housing Infrastructure Fund, National Productivity Investment Fund.

As a result, there have been reduced opportunities to secure active travel funding, except where developer contributions can be used as match funding. This represents the best opportunity for delivering local walking/cycling aspirations, and DCC can also influence detailed design of new developments to encourage sustainable travel. Developers can appeal however, which risks a lower level of contribution, so requests must be realistic.

Tavistock

Tavistock is well connected to the surrounding area via the National Cycle Network (<https://osmaps.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/ncn>) and in the town there are good through connections, linking into the town centre and to the employment sites in the south.

Moving forward it would be good to have a co-ordinated list of the local priorities – what do you want to see in Tavistock? What connections are missing/could be enhanced? Small scale, local aspirations mapped in a simple document, would give us a ready-to-go strategy for Tavistock if/when new developments or suitable funding arise. Similarly, there are sometimes funding opportunities that local communities can bid for (National Lottery).

The Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan details Tavistock development:

- Callington Road development of 750 homes
- Mixed-use development at Plymouth Road of 300 homes and 1.8ha employment
- Smaller developments to the north

Infrastructure required to facilitate these includes:

- A railway station including parking to support re-opening of Tavistock to Bere Alston
- Works to Drake's Statue, Drake's Store and Pixon Lane roundabout
- A386 improvements between Tavistock and Plymouth

As developments come forward, their impact on the transport network is considered and they may be asked to contribute e.g. Callington Road site contribution towards the railway reopening (shortfall remains).

What next?

DCC have delivered £20m+ walking/cycling projects since 2015 through a proactive approach, being opportunistic with funding. DCC continue to ensure a pipeline of 'shovel-ready' projects, in light of reduced funding these are focused on the existing strategy.

There is a local opportunity to develop a plan of aspirations for active travel in Tavistock. Other towns e.g. Ivybridge have developed a short report with a mapped menu of options which can be ready for funding opportunities as and when they arise (at county or town level), likely to arise in the future as the emphasis on active travel/climate change grows.

Update on Tavistock to Bere Alston

- Cost escalation issues with railway between Tavistock and Bere Alston
- S106 for Callington Rd well worded as can be 'for any sustainable travel' and several alternative options have been looked at e.g. walking/cycling/'future mobility'
- Recent Government commitment to reopening railways 'Restoring Your Railway Fund' has led to revisiting heavy rail scheme. A bid for restoring the railway will be submitted to the 'Accelerating Existing Proposals' stream.

Questions

CIlr AJ: Asked when something will happen regarding re-opening the railway line as there has been much talk for 15 years with many different options explored.

HC: Major infrastructure schemes take a very long time to develop, and that lots of design and survey work has been undertaken behind the scenes. Remains part of DCC's capital programme. All these studies should put us in good stead for the bid to be submitted to the new Accelerated Ideas Fund.

KH: Asked for examples of other towns who had developed a plan of local aspirations, Ivybridge commissioned Sustrans to carry out a very detailed report, have any simpler been done?

HC: There is no one-size fits all, and we would not prescribe something overly complex, DCC would welcome any plans the town could put together for further discussion.

PT: Provided Callington Rd update, noting that when considering planning applications, the authority is trying to get contributions for all sorts of things (education, open space, transport).

- Priority has until recently been gathering funding for Tavistock to Bere Alston
- Securing money would be much easier with such a priority list

RS: Noted that Ivybridge is arguably further behind Tavistock in terms of its cycle network, good to remember that all towns are different.

3. COVID-19 Response – Hannah Clark

COVID-19 saw a wholesale change in the way we travelled. Public transport was advised against, cars journeys dramatically dropped and walking/cycling in the new, quieter streets became the norm. Need further investment to continue promoting active and green recovery.

In May, Transport Secretary Grant Shapps made an announcement of £250m for reallocating road space to promote walking/cycling to help embed altered behaviours and demonstrate the positive effects: the Emergency Active Travel Fund. This has two phases: the first focused on temporary measures, and the second for making some of these measures permanent.

DCC have been allocated £338k for Phase 1, guidance states this should be for areas where public transport use is high and walking/cycling will replace these trips. The DCC package focuses on Exeter, Newton Abbot and Barnstaple as the regional centres with high public transport usage.

A pot of money that local communities could bid into to provide traffic management in town centres was ringfenced. These would be 50% match funded by the community and locally delivered. The deadline for proposals was 19 June, they are currently being assessed as were very oversubscribed. An application from Tavistock was received.

Note additional fund allocated to the District Councils called 'Reopening High Streets Safely Fund'.

4. Long Term Active Travel Improvements (discussion led by participants)

HC: Open discussion on the topic of long-term active travel improvements. Schemes already committed in DCC's Strategy include feasibility work on a Yelverton to Roborough link, and the railway reopening. As current funding opportunities are limited this is effectively the compilation of a 'wish list' document setting out the opportunities for future strategies.

KH: Asked if there is still an opportunity for Tavistock to bid for the EATF.

Suggestions for local aspirational plan:

- Increased cycle parking signage
- School travel plans
- Promotion of the 'Widen My Path' mapping tool, provided by CyclingUK
- Better tunnel lighting
- Improved path maintenance
- 20mph speed limits
- Secure cycle and luggage storage (e.g. lockers)

HC: DfT has allocated £338K to DCC for Phase 1. Phase 2 likely to be for making Phase 1 permanent but awaiting guidance.

JF: Provided link for reporting overgrown vegetation:

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/report-a-problem/>

Cllr DS: Volunteers and community payback schemes can also help clear vegetation etc.

RS: Asked if there is scope for a phased approach with the railway - could a walking/cycling route be done first?

HC: An active travel link has been looked at in the past, unfortunately due to constraints a walking/cycling route alongside the railway is not possible. With the 'Restoring Your Railway Fund' the focus has moved back to heavy rail.

Cllr UM: Focus on the railway mean other active links have not been focussed on as much. How is the Callington Rd development going to access railway and canal path?

RS: A link at Monksmead in the north was part of the site masterplan, unfortunately no opportunities at the southern end due to land issues.

PS: Note that the S106 isn't collected until a certain level of housing is reached which makes timescales hard to predict. The original design had link joining up with footpath and cycle way, but this is part of a later phase, for phase 1 access needs to be via Callington Road.

Cllr PS: Could the link from the canal to Lumburn bends be explored? It is not currently a right of way although there is a bridge and a track through a private farm.

RM: Public Rights of Way mapping: <http://map.devon.gov.uk/dccviewer/MyLocalPaths/> Can explain the existing legal status of routes, mapping and informing the conversation.

KR: Want to come up with pragmatic approach containing quick wins, within a longer term approach, carry out an audit an area and the facilities that are available, and how to connect people to key routes. Climate Emergency will require radical actions in reducing short distance trips, travel to school, work, new housing developments. Is there match funding to do an Ivybridge style study?

HC: Unfortunately DCC are unable to be able to provide match funding due to the number of market towns however town council or district councils may be able to advise on this.

5. Closing remarks

Cllr DS: Good roundtable discussion of future ambitions, starting place for a bottom up approach on locally driven ambitions for active travel in Tavistock, need to create a plan with both quick fixes and longer term ambitions.

- The Youth Parliament were invited to the meeting but not able to attend, Cllr DS has a meeting with them in a couple of days.
- A date for the next meeting will be circulated, and DCC officers invited to a meeting at a later date once local discussions have taken place.