

TUNBRIDGE WELLS JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD

Monday, 19 October 2020

PRESENT: Borough Councillors Stanyer (Chairman), Bruneau, Scott and Lewis
County Councillors Hamilton (Vice-Chairman), McInroy, Oakford and Rankin
Parish Councillor Mackonochie

Officers in Attendance: Hilary Smith (Economic Development Manager), Nick Baldwin (Senior Engineer, Parking), Nikola Floodgate (Schemes Planning and Delivery Manager), Paul Leary, Carol Valentine (West Kent Highway Manager) and Caroline Britt (Democratic Services Officer)

Other Members in Attendance: Councillors Morton and Rutland

APOLOGIES

TB1/20 Apologies were received from Councillors Lidstone, Woodward and Barrington-King. Councillor Holden was not present.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

TB2/20 There were no disclosable pecuniary or other significant interests declared at the meeting.

NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS WISHING TO SPEAK

TB3/20 Councillor Morton had registered to speak on Agenda Item 6 and Councillor Rutland had registered to speak on Agenda Item 7.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 10 FEBRUARY 2020

TB4/20 Members reviewed the minutes. No amendments were proposed.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting dated 10 February 2020 be approved as a correct record

UPDATE REPORT

TB5/20 There were no comments.

EMERGENCY ACTIVE TRAVEL FUND SCHEMES UPDATE

TB6/20 Adrian Berendt, Chair of the Town Forum had registered to speak:

“I am speaking on behalf of the Town Forum of which I am the Chair and I should like to start by congratulating the officers both at the Borough Council and KCC for their work on the Active Travel Fund Schemes. They had many difficult decisions to make in a very, very short timeframe. As a consequence we know that some of the design details were not brilliant and we also know that communication was lacking. But overall I think they did a really good job.

I had occasion to watch the KCC Cabinet meeting from last week and apart from one or two uninformed comments – (it occurs to me that if Councillors were commenting on traffic matters perhaps they ought to know their

Highway Code). Overall I was delighted with that meeting because there was a lot about consulting local people about the future schemes.

I have also read the Grant Shapps (MP) letter which says 3 things; one that it supports Active Travel in no uncertain terms. It talks about doing Active Travel properly and it talks about consulting local people. And the Town Forum, which is a strong supporter of Active Travel and has been for many years is willing and able to be consulted on the tranche 2 matters. And probably more importantly on the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan which comes up in the next agenda item. So congratulations to the officers. I am glad there is going to be more and better consultation for future spending and the Town Forum is read and willing to take part.”

Philip Munslow from Tunbridge Wells Bicycle Users Group (TWBUG) had registered to speak:

“Good evening everyone and thank you for the opportunity to speak to you on the Emergency Active Travel Fund measures.

I am here on behalf on Tunbridge Wells Bicycle Users Group and whilst we echo what Adrian Berendt has just said we just want to encourage and urge Councillors and Council officers to continue to support the existing fund measures already installed and urge to you identify and implement opportunities for the next tranche of funding – tranche 2.

We still have the unique opportunity to make significant positive changes to our town all paid for by Central Government. We all know there is an urgent need to take action and we need to make the most of this great opportunity.

Whilst our current focus is understandably dominated by Covid-19, all of the long standing issues in the background caused by our over reliance on cars, particularly those for short journeys still remain. That is; congested roads, CO2 emissions, poor air quality, inactivity and sedentary lifestyles and the safety of those who chose to walk and cycle.

To solve these pressing issues, we have to redesign our street space. By doing so, this will incentivise more cycling and walking and provide less incentive for people to pick up their car keys for those short journeys.

We look forward to hearing your support for improved maintenance of the existing tranche 1 measures, particularly the light segregation on the A26 and your shoulders behind some ambitious plans for tranche 2.”

Councillor Morton had registered to speak:

“I am speaking in favour of the Emergency Active Travel scheme for Reynolds Lane because these measures would discourage vehicles using the lane as a through road to avoid traffic on the main A26 route into and out of Tunbridge Wells.

I understand that KCC has installed a monitoring loop in the road in order to get a vehicle count for the week and I would be very interested in getting a report once this is completed.

I also wanted to let you know that we Councillors and some residents have also conducted our own survey and our studies have shown that the short

diversion does not cut down on driving times by a sufficient margin to warrant such a step. Contrary to this it would be far quicker if cars were not weaving in and out of the side roads to join traffic further on in their journeys. Closing Reynolds Lane would provide a Safe Route to school for walking and cycling for school children travelling to St. Gregory's, TWGGS, Skinners and Bennett's as well as schools further afield like Bishops Down Primary, Rosehill, St Augustine's Primary and even Southborough Primary to use the lane.

In summary, our residents would like Reynolds Lane to become a safe and pleasant lane to walk and cycle if only drivers observed the restrictions. I hope that KCC Highways will give us due consideration for a more permanent form of restriction but give the residents and schools mentioned above due notification. New, clearer signage would be very welcome, telling motorists that the lane is closed to all through traffic and that it is open only to residents and visitors."

Mr Chris Gow (member of the public) had registered to speak:

"I am delighted to see the improvement of the safety of the A26 cycle lane with the installation of the 'light segregation' and I recognise the role the Council has played in improving the situation so quickly.

Now there is increased importance to deliver safe alternative transport for folk in this Covid era, may I have the assurance from the Council that the measures put in place will be kept, and development in other areas of the Borough to provide a safe and sustainable cycle routes in the Borough.

I would not like to hear that the measures have been abandoned as they have been in Brighton.

Further to delivering safe cycle routes in the Borough may I ask why there are parking bays obstructing the cycle lane (between the junctions of Beltring Road and Southfields Road) which poses a dangerous situation where cyclists have to swerve into the path of the main flow of traffic to avoid parked cars.

Additionally, the integrity of the cycle lane is compromised on the south route where cyclists entering the bus lane are put at risk by impatient drivers using the bus lane to avoid queuing and travel along the bus lane turning into New England Road or East Cliff Road. This dangerous situation could be prevented by placing 'No Left Turn' at the entrances to New England and East Cliff Roads.

I would urge that these actions are examined and action taken before there is a collision involving cyclists. There already have been collisions, one when a vehicle ran into the parked cars at Beltring Road, and another one involving a cyclist and a bus in the cycle lane. We are encouraging folk to cycle and to walk rather than use public transport as now we are practicing social distancing, and more folk will use cycle lanes. We need to make them safe before there is a tragedy.

Further to the development of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods in Tunbridge Wells, may I say the traffic speeds on the St Johns 20mph area are frequently above 20mph and can I ask Members of the Committee if further steps are being taken to curb speeding, and also to discourage rat-running in this area.

Plans have been explored by residents, and a comprehensive scheme is needed to control the problems, and may I ask that a plan that is cheap to implement, and has been discussed and drawn up in principle and available now, and which I would be delighted to discuss in detail with you or your colleagues and consultants, be considered as part of the remit of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. Additionally proposals could be put in place in installing average speed cameras for example, as have been deployed in Nottingham to control speeds in these sorts of areas. I would be delighted to discuss these with somebody in some detail and try and get a safer implementation of low traffic and new schemes to encourage cycling and walking.”

Hilary Smith Economic Development Manager at TWBC introduced this joint report with KCC which included the following:

- The scheme was announced by the Secretary of State for the Department for Transport earlier this year.
- The scheme was to support the installation of temporary highway schemes with the aim of both facilitating social distancing and supporting Active Travel.
- The timescale for delivering these schemes was particularly short which unfortunately meant the usual consultation processes were not possible.
- Failure to submit proposals to the Department for Transport within the defined timescale would have put any future bids for funding in jeopardy.
- The schemes were delivered by either temporary or experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (where required).
- It was important to note that these schemes were trials which were intended to be monitored carefully with any feedback received to be acted on.
- KCC held discussions with all their District and Borough Councils about possible schemes to be put forward to the Department for Transport. They were however, very conscious that the level of consultation they would have wished to carry out was not possible within the tight timeframe.
- KCC would ensure that the money received for tranche 2 would be spent with consultation having taken place.
- Although the timescales imposed meant there was no opportunity for formal consultation, TWBC did put their proposed list of schemes to Members, Business Representative Organisations and other Community Groups such as the Town Forum through the TWBC Covid-19 Panel.
- It was also noted that the schemes were based on past ideas from residents and businesses. Some were also contained in TWBC’s existing cycling strategy.
- The report included details of those schemes that had been selected by KCC for inclusion in tranche 1 along with some initial feedback since implementation.
- TWBC recognised the issues caused by the short timescales imposed. Feedback was now being received and being looked at closely. The intention was now to take measures to amend and/or improve where this was possible.

Points made in the discussion were as follows:

- Concern was raised that the sign only scheme at Reynolds Lane was not being complied with.
- It was suggested that Reynolds Lane and Culverden Down should be looked at together and consideration be given to making the top end of Culverden Down one way (going west) with traffic going the other way taken along Culverden Park. In doing this, Reynolds Lane would no longer be available for rat runners in the Culverden area.
- The use of green technology e.g. electric scooters etc. should be considered in areas such as Mount Pleasant and the High Street.
- The introduction of a 20mph (Zone) in Culverden Down was now progressing and was very welcome. There was disappointment that Royal Chase was not included as part of the scheme.
- High Street retailers were disappointed regarding the lack of consultation. It was further suggested that the aesthetics of the scheme were ugly and unsafe. Trade had been hit significantly as passing trade had all but stopped. In addition the scheme had caused traffic jams. It was hoped that KCC and TWBC would engage with the retailers and ensure their views were taken into consideration as part of the tranche 2 process.
- The scheme in Paddock Wood (Commercial Road) had been suspended to allow for significant road works to take place.
- Any scheme that would reduce the traffic on the A26 would be very welcome. It would also promote alternative transport such as cycling and improve air quality in the area.
- Concern was raised about the light segregation work on the A26 cycle lane and how vehicles should behave when trying to make space for the emergency services. It was further noted that many of the 'wands' that had been installed were either laying across the cycle path, on the road, or were on the footpath. Of paramount importance was to ensure that cycle lanes were safe for cyclists. It was suggested that the A26, being very busy and narrow in places, was not suitable. It would be better to consider using some of the less busy roads that ran parallel to the A26.
- TWBC were working with KCC to improve the A26 for cyclists and were aware that the 'wands' were being removed. TWBC were looking at more permanent measures which could include the use of Orcas.
- It was suggested that these schemes be considered in further detail separately from the formal JTB meeting – perhaps in the form of a smaller working group.
- TWBC Officers, members of the Town Forum and The BID had visited retailers in the High Street. Whilst it provided only a snapshot, the main concerns highlighted were the appearance of the barriers and the difficulties being experienced with deliveries. TWBC were in the process of looking at how the look of the scheme could be improved, potentially replacing the barriers with Planters or Parklets.
- It was proposed and agreed by Members the recommendation included in the report include the word 'urgently' to read; "KCC and TWBC urgently monitor and review the Emergency Active Travel Fund schemes and the feedback to the KCC portal and to TWBC directly. Measures will be taken to amend and improve the schemes wherever this is possible." It was further agreed by Members that consultation with Members should also be included in the recommendation.

Recommendation

“KCC and TWBC urgently monitor and review the Emergency Active Travel Fund schemes and the feedback to the KCC portal and to TWBC directly.

Measures will be taken to amend and improve the schemes wherever this is possible. JTB Members would be included as part of the consultation process.”

LOCAL CYCLING & WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

TB7/20

Councillor Rutland had registered to speak:

“I am here to talk about the experimental road closure of York Road in connection with the public realm stage 2 scheme which is related to the Walking and Cycling Plan. I have a statement to read on behalf of Pippa Collard from the York Road Residents Association. I hope that members of this Joint Transportation Board will be able to not only take note, but please take action, since action is what residents of these streets were promised, most recently in February.

A trial closure of York Road will promote cycling and walking plus help deliver the objectives of the new public realm. Those objectives are - and I quote from the Cabinet report of April 2018 - ‘a more pedestrian-focussed space’ ‘a community space’ ‘more active travel’ ‘to provide a more tranquil space to be enjoyed by residents and visitors’. A road closure that leads to a reduction in motor vehicles travelling through would be a positive thing. However, the effect of a York Road closure could see displacement of through traffic on to Dudley Road, so we would need to look at the two roads together.

This is Pippa’s statement:

“I am grateful to Justine for saying some words on my behalf tonight, in addition to her own.

‘I spoke in front of you in January 2019, almost two years ago, to flag up the impact that the new traffic restrictions on Mount Pleasant would have on York Road - a narrow residential street with narrow pavements and houses fronting onto those pavements. The concern was that once the route outside Mount Pleasant was closed to cars, then York Road would be used as the primary cut through from London Road into Monson Road.

Conversations and representations to the Council and others have taken place, the works have been completed and enforcement of the new restrictions have commenced despite public outcry and the current universal confusion over the appalling signage.

Towards the end of the works, for three months York Road was temporarily closed at the Town end whilst it was used as a storage area. The road became more of a community, pedestrians were safer on the pavements and residents were able to park near their homes.

It was agreed in the Council offices approximately this time last year, with representation from York and Dudley Roads, local councillors and KCC, that

an official experimental road closure would be forthwith installed in York Road, to reduce the chance of it becoming a rat run and to encourage more walking and cycling.

Since that time nothing has happened. Apart from Covid which understandably affected all traffic flows around the town. Traffic has now re-ignited and cars are starting to be fined for inadvertently using Mount Pleasant and with this the flow of cars down York Road is increasing.

The chat on social media, apart from being generally vitriolic about the confusion caused by the lack of signage and the project is the odd helpful person advising that York Road is the new route into town! I have seen this in local papers as well. It is truly not acceptable to allow such a rat run. And it is not acceptable for the Council to continue to delay the road closure (allowing still for public service vehicles), having already agreed it in principle, only for another amendment to traffic routes down the line which will further annoy local car drivers. Now is the time!!”

That is the end of Pippa’s statement.

The residents bordering Mount Pleasant were greatly inconvenienced during the works. The public realm scheme has created a problem with through traffic that was not there before. I ask for an urgent re-engagement with this issue. Cllr James Rands and I are willing to help in any way we can. Thank you.”

Ben Coleman from Phil Jones Associates gave a presentation on the current work on the Tunbridge Wells Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan which included the following:

- The presentation gave an overview of the work to date but to note it was work in progress and there was still more work to be done.
- There were three key strands to the project:
 - o Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs)
 - o Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Programme (LCWIP)
 - o Inter-Urban Routes (IURs)
- Low Traffic Neighbourhoods
 - o An approach that could be applied to areas where through traffic had an adverse effect on other users.
 - o It didn’t just look at traffic, it covered air quality, access to open space, access to schools and propensity for mode shift.
 - o Low Traffic Neighbourhoods were imbedded in national policy which encouraged through traffic to use main roads that would enable local roads to become more pleasant for cycling and walking.
 - o The key themes that were used to establish the feasibility of possible neighbourhoods were Trip Attractors, Health, Population, Road Safety, Mode Shift and Traffic.
- Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Programme
 - o These were intended to provided a long term approach to the delivery of local cycling and walking measures.
 - o Key was to understand behaviours and where there was potential to increase walking and cycling.
 - o The main output was to provide a list of potential walking and cycling interventions based on evidence collected.

- There were 6 stages of the process:
 - Determining Scope
 - Gathering Information
 - Network Planning for Cycling
 - Network Planning for Walking
 - Prioritising Improvements
 - Integration and Application
- The work was currently in stages 3 and 4 for the Tunbridge Wells and Paddock Wood work.
- Inter-Urban Routes
 - The aim, to establish comfortable and safe routes for cycling between settlements.
 - The delivery of inter-urban routes had to potential to be quite complex as it might include the issue of land ownership and public rights of way.

Discussion included the following comments:

- Routes should be looked at holistically to include all modes of transport e.g. mobility scooters, electric scooters etc.
- Combining routes to enable all modes of transport to be accommodated would have to be considered carefully as this would depend on the amount of space available and the level of usage by the different modes.
- The use of electric scooters had not been considered directly in the current piece of work. This form of transport was still relatively new and work was still taking place as to the safety requirements and where the most appropriate place for them to be used.
- Cross boundary issues were still being discussed particularly with Tonbridge and Malling.
- It was agreed that Members interested in speaking directly with TWBC and the consultants should contact officers direct to make the necessary arrangements.

PARISH COUNCIL HIGHWAYS IMPROVEMENT PLANS

TB8/20 Paul Leary, West Kent Schemes Manager at Kent County Council provided a summary of the Highway Improvement Plans (HIPs) which included the following:

- HIPs were a relatively new initiative that would give Parish Councils an opportunity to set out issues within their area.
- The first stage of the process was a template that KCC send to the Parish Council. Parish Councils would then list those locations where there was a concern, desire or wish list. The template also allowed Parish Councils to make recommendations and/or suggestions about possible solutions.
- KCC also encouraged that locations were listed in order of priority.
- Stage 2 was for KCC to plan and agree a joint action plan with the Parish Council. This would include identifying and assigning responsibility for any actions. KCC would also endeavour to provide a cost estimate and possible funding sources.
- KCC were keen to encourage Parish Councils to submit HIPs once a year and to agree a set of objectives and actions for the year ahead. The HIPs were also reviewed at least once a year which gave an

opportunity to look back on any actions that had been undertaken and a programme to take forward into the following year.

- KCC gave out a Parish Information Pack which gave examples of typical things that might come up. For example, various forms of traffic calming measures and pedestrian crossings, costs and considerations for appropriate use.
- It was also important to ensure that residents were included in discussions.

SPEED MANAGEMENT AND HGV'S ON RURAL ROADS

TB9/20 Parish Councillor Graeme Stevenson, Brenchley and Matfield Parish Council had registered to speak:

“Residents of Blind Lane which is part of Brenchley Road (Blind Lane is the section between Pixot Hill/Crook Road crossroads and the western end of Brenchley High Street) and Windmill Hill in Brenchley, have been complaining repeatedly about the number of HGV’s using these unsuitable roads, particularly local scrap lorries belonging to a number of premises based at Old hay, near Paddock Wood. These companies include Scrap co, JR Car Spares Auto Recycle, Core Commercial, Charles Trent, Osmonds plus others, repeatedly use these unsuitable roads for access to and from their depots from the larger trunk road network of the A21 or the A228. Their use of these roads causes damage to property and road signs and is dangerous for parents and children going to Brenchley and Matfield Primary School, which is located at the western end of Blind Lane. A much wider and safer route is available via Mascalls Court Lane and Mascalls Court Road. To give an understanding of the unsuitability of these roads: Blind Lane (this section of Brenchley Road) has pinch points of 3.9m in width. The widest point of Blind Lane is 5.2m. Whilst Mascalls Court Lane has a consistent measurement of 6.5m width and Mascalls Court Road has only one pinch point of 4.9m in width. From Old hay there is also the option of using Churn Lane, to access the B2162, which runs between Horsmonden and Collier Street.

These firms have been contacted by residents and claim they have been told by KCC Highways that they must not use Mascalls Lane at Paddock Wood as it passes Mascalls school. By coming through Brenchley they are passing Brenchley and Matfield Primary school, if this claim is true should the same argument not apply?

Our request is that these roads are identified and provided with signage stating ‘Unsuitable for HGVs’ and the lorries serving these local scrap companies are asked to use the wider and safer routes provided by Mascalls Court Lane or Church Road to access the trunk road network? It is noted that recently similar signage has been erected at both Watermans Lane and Chantlers Hill nearby (even though Chantlers Hill has a consistent 6m width), and residents in these affected roads in Brenchley do not understand why Blind Lane (Brenchley Road) should be any different.”

Paul Leary, West Kent Schemes Manager at Kent County Council provided a summary of the work being done by KCC in regards to speed management and HGV’s on rural roads which included the following:

- Speed Management
 - o KCC work within the guidelines at set out by the Department for Transport when setting speed limits (Department for Transport Circular 01/2013).
 - o Speed limits must be evidence lead and self explaining.
 - o The ultimate aim was to ensure that speed limits were self complaint.
 - o Speed limits must be appropriate for the road. They should take account of any history of collisions, take account of the road geometry and the make up of the area (schools, residential etc.). It would also consider what engineering measures were already in place.
 - o KCC would also look at the road function; was it a through route, did it connect with any major destinations etc.
 - o Another consideration related to the make-up of road users including pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians etc.
 - o Existing traffic speeds were also a major consideration.
 - o To note, what whilst most rural roads were subject to the national speed limit of 60mph (single carriageway), in the vast majority of cases drivers were travelling below and often significantly below this speed limit. This was primarily due to the nature and appearance of these roads making it impossible to drive anywhere near the 60mph limit.
 - o The introduction of lower speed limits on these roads (which were already self-enforcing) would require the installation of speed limit signs which could lead to an increase in speeds.
 - o KCC were able to establish vehicle speeds using traffic surveys. The results of those surveys would be used to inform whether any action was appropriate and any associated costs.
- HGV's on Rural Roads
 - o Any issues/concerns related to HGV's on rural roads should be reported to KCC.
 - o If in a Parish Council area it should be done via the HIP process.
 - o It should be noted that whilst the use of 'Unsuitable for HGVs' signing was something that could be used, the signs were advisory signs and therefore not enforceable. It was also important these signs were not overused.
 - o The Lorry Watch scheme was effective where restrictions were already in place e.g. a 7.5 tonne restriction or a width restriction.
 - o Lorry Watch signs could be put up on their own with no volunteers on the ground. Parish Council's were welcome to discuss this option with the KCC Freight Team.
 - o Restrictions could be imposed where it was thought necessary but there were cost implications to consider (TRO's and implementation costs).
 - o Enforcement of any restrictions would be a matter for the police.
 - o KCC were in discussion with the Department for Transport regarding lorry parks.
 - o KCC had a Freight Action Plan which set out plans for HGV movement in Kent.
 - o KCC were also looking to improve HGV parking overnight in laybys and verges. Enforcement would be dependent on whether there were any restrictions in place.

Action:

1. Paul Leary to contact Councillor Graeme Stevenson to give an update on the issues raised in his statement.

HIGHWAY WORKS PROGRAMME

TB10/20 Carol Valentine, Highways Project Manager at KCC introduced the Highways Work Programme for 2019/20 onwards that summarised the various schemes across Highways for delivery in the current financial year and through to 2023/24.

Discussion included the following comments:

- It was suggested that the reconstruction of the Red Brick Footway on the eastern side of London Road should also include the western side.
- The report mentioned the installation of a zebra crossing on London Road but didn't say where on the road it would be placed.
- It was suggested that the 20mph zone in place at Southborough Primary School be extended to include more of the side streets in the area.
- Bridge strikes on the railway bridge on North Farm Road (High Brooms) should be looked at with something put in place to remind larger vehicle users.
- Earlier in the year a series of meetings had taken place with KCC on the implementation and success (or otherwise) of the Public Realm. They included a number of issues:
 - o A number of trials to establish how much of the new system was being used properly.
 - o To look at pedestrian behaviour.
 - o How much traffic was going across York Road.
 - o Concern that York Road/Dudley Road would become rat runs.
- It was accepted that the pandemic had delayed this work but that it should now be given urgent attention to deal with residents concerns about the roads becoming a rat run. Details of earlier road counts and current road counts should now be made available.
- Another concern was that there should be a better, safer crossing at the junction with Monson Road.
- It was further suggested that there was a retrial of the road closures of York Road and Dudley Road.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

TOPICS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

TB11/20 Comments were made in respect of the following matters:

- The next meeting to include a presentation by the Cornford Lane/Halls Hole Road residents.
- Suggestions to promote and improve the town centre and the wider area and to encourage people to visit. To consider alternative modes of transport. It should also include a review of

- the accessibility of the town centre for those with a disability.
- Actions to better protect the railway bridge at High Brooms.
 - The current position of the JTB agreement.
 - Air Quality.
 - A trial area to study the effects of banning HGV's on rural lanes.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

TB12/20 The next meeting was scheduled for Monday 25 January 2021 at 6:00pm

NOTES:

The meeting concluded at 8.30 pm.

An audio recording of this meeting is available on the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council website.