

Maidstone Cycle Campaign Forum

Response to the public consultation of:

Kent County Council Draft 5 Year Plan

1. Who we are...

We are Maidstone Cycle Campaign Forum, a charity (Registered Charity Number 1172691) representing the cycling community in Maidstone. Our aim is to improve the cycling conditions in Maidstone and encourage people to take up cycling as part of a healthy lifestyle, and also as a practical and environmentally friendly alternative to cars for short journeys to shops, schools, etc

2. Why is our response relevant?

The objectives of the MCCF closely align to the stated objectives of the Leader of the Council as set out in the introduction to the plan.

The number of biking casualties is rising at a higher rate than those of motorised transport (DoT annual report 2019).

The need to protect the safety of cyclists in the county has never been greater.

The role of active travel as an environmentally friendly and viable alternative to motorised travel is growing by the year.

The contribution of active travel as a source of primary prevention of major illnesses is proven.

3. Summary of our response....

Overall, we believe that the current version of the Plan represents a missed opportunity to assert the County Council as a body committed to encouraging and promoting cycling and active travel generally. For example, we find it disappointing that the summary of the Council's aspirations for active travel extends to four lines of general text on page 21, and a passing reference to the Active Travel Strategy. We believe that the plan should set out the key measurable objectives for the promotion of active travel in the county and commit to the ongoing review and implementation of the action plan which underpins the Active Travel Strategy. We would expect the Plan to highlight several major 'SMART' targets. (We note that the Plan generally has very few measurable

targets within it). We would also like to see a commitment to the maintenance and enhancement of existing walking and cycling routes, both on the highway and as part of the Public Rights of Way network.

Whilst our membership is predominately Maidstone based, we offer our views on the plan overall and its relevance to cyclists across all the towns and regions of Kent. We wish to see an integrated network of active travel routes to enable people to travel by non-motorised methods to key locations.

Set out below are our specific observations on the Plan and how it should be 'beefed up' to reflect the role ***Cycling and Active Travel*** could play in the County to contribute to support the Leaders statement that: The Council's role is to.. "Improve the quality of life; tackle health issues at an early stage and relieve the pressure on Kent's transport infrastructure."

We expect part of the Council's response to this feedback will be to refer to the Active Travel Strategy, however the points we make in our feedback, acknowledge the role of the ATS, but believe that these comments should be recognised in the highest level in any forward Plan the Council produces.

4. Detailed response

Page No	Reference	Comment	Required Outcome
17	Securing sustainable infrastructure	<p>The current objectives are not comprehensive in the role properly planned active travel provision could take when considering new residential and road infrastructure developments. The Dept of Transport Annual report published on 26/9/19) shows that the number of pedal cyclists killed or seriously injured has risen by 21% between 2008 and 2018. This is predominantly in urban locations. The casualty per mile rate for pedal cyclists is similar to that of motorcyclists (same report).</p>	<p>An objective should be added which concentrates on new urban and suburban development schemes (or housing schemes over 200 units), to ensure that cycle infrastructure is proactively planned for and designed into the surrounding road infrastructure.</p> <p>An objective should be added to ensure that enhancements to cycling and walking infrastructure is considered for all highway schemes especially those relating to key routes, major towns in Kent and around transport hubs such as busy railway stations.</p> <p>An objective should be added to seek developer contributions, where appropriate, to promote and subsidise the introduce of community bike rental schemes and provide secure cycle storage. This objective should be embedded in an update to the Kent Design guide and to Kent's parking planning guidance.</p>
21	Connected Transport and Communities	<p>There is insufficient reference to and promotion of Active Travel. HGV and traffic generally, is dramatically increasing. With the introduction of new Electric Bike (E-bikes) technology the</p>	<p>An objective should be added to introduce more cycle superhighways around the heavily trafficked routes in Kent, particularly around towns. Statistics show that there is a specific problem in Canterbury,</p>

		<p>opportunity for more and more people of all ages to cycle for both destination transport purposes and for leisure is dramatically increasing. Our feedback is that potential cyclists are reluctant to take to the roads for safety reasons</p>	<p>with Maidstone and the Medway Towns being the next worst areas for serious pedal cycle accidents.</p> <p>Areas of specific 'contradictory' use, (for example Hermitage Lane in Maidstone, where the increased Gallagher Quarry HGV's, the increased residential development and the route to Barming Station are factors which create transport friction and , is a prime contender for proper cycle lane provision). An objective should be added to identify these critical routes and make provision for a safer cycle infrastructure. These routes should be identified in accordance with Kent's Casualty Reduction Strategy.</p> <p>An objective should be added for the Council to work with the GLA and North West Kent local authorities to improve the provision of cycle superhighways which should radiate in and out of Kent from the Capital.</p>
Page 23	Outcome 3; Connected Transport	<p>There is insufficient 'weight' given to the role of active travel and cycling.</p>	<p>Replace bullet point 8 to a more meaningful and measurable objective. As currently written, it makes little sense. (A strategy is not an outcome, it's just words)</p>
		<p>Safety generally; Potholes and Roadworks, (for example roadworks with insufficient time lapse on traffic lights) present a growing and major risk to cyclists.</p>	<p>An objective should be added to introduce a new policy to provide higher standards highways inspections where pedestrians, cyclists or vulnerable road users are present.</p>

<p>Page 28</p>	<p>Outcome 5; A cleaner Greener Kent</p>	<p>A dramatic increase in cycling – from a current c.6% of all urban passenger miles to 11% in 2030 and 14% in 2050 – could cut CO2 emissions from urban passenger transport by about 7% by 2030, and nearly 11% in 2050.</p> <p>If people in England became as likely to cycle as people in the Netherlands, there would be around two million fewer car driving commuters. Consequently, English authorities could reduce CO2 outputs by over 1,500 tonnes a year on average. Kent should be amongst those leading the way.</p> <p>The current objectives are too general and do not highlight the opportunities for cycling and active travel to reduce carbon emissions.</p>	<p>An Objective should be added to require local policy frameworks to reduce the need to travel by car and promote cycling and other low-carbon alternatives to motorised vehicles. This should also be a central objective for all relevant development agencies and local authorities.</p> <p>Transport projects and development proposals that are predicted (or are likely) to increase greenhouse gas emissions should be closely scrutinised and rejected where insufficient consideration has been given to possible alternative transport solutions, other than cars and other high carbon alternatives. The County should where possible oblige local authorities to make their contribution towards meeting the targets set by the Climate Change Act and progress should be reported and monitored effectively. Voluntary action alone is not sufficient. In its own operations the County should seek out as many low-carbon alternatives as possible.</p> <p>We would like to see greater support for those districts who are taking a proactive step to combat these issues, such as Maidstone Borough Council, to ensure a collaborative approach.</p>
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5. Conclusion,

There is little doubt amongst informed scientists that greenhouse emissions from human activity are already contributing to an increase in extreme weather events and loss of life around the world, and that dangerously high levels of CO₂ concentrations are already being reached. To delay tackling climate change will be far more costly than acting now.

Cycling provided highly efficient transport before carbon-intensive travel became widespread, and it is part of the solution for a low-carbon future. It is one of the simplest lifestyle choices that individuals can make to reduce their carbon footprint. It also has huge benefits for their health, their finances and their neighbourhoods.

Kent County Council like other Government bodies and businesses should act to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transport by encouraging cycling as a zero-carbon option and by reducing the need to travel.

Overall, we are of the view that the 5 year plan lacks any real measurable targets generally and particularly around the important topic of active travel and cycling. We believe that as it stands, KCC are missing an opportunity to create an environment for the residents of Kent to get onboard with the general trend towards healthier and greener lifestyles, by travelling through and around Kent by pedal power. It appears that the Council are playing 'lip service' to the topic rather than seriously embracing the movement towards greener and more active transport.

We urge and encourage you to take a stronger and more proactive position in transport infrastructure interlinked with softer measures such as promotion and training, planning, development, climate issues and safety, in the context of active travel and particularly cycling, in the county.