

County Council
16th July 2014

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor John Powell, Portfolio Holder for Highways and Environmental Health

SUBJECT: Question from County Councillor Matthew Dorrance

What is the Council doing to promote and support cycling across the County?

For the past 10 years Powys CC has been very successful in attracting external funding to build new walking and cycling routes and the county has received in excess of a million pounds. Routes have been constructed in all areas of the county and range from the relatively small but very well used community link at Llanyre to the sizeable riverside path in Newtown. The Council has built entirely new routes in Ystradgynlais and Machynlleth, and developed a traffic-free link between Newtown and Welshpool in conjunction with the Canal & Rivers Trust. Promotional leaflets are available for most of these routes.

We have been successful in attracting the Tour of Britain to Powys for the past three years and will again host a race start at Newtown this year. Such high profile events promote the take up of cycling and will build on the current presence of the Tour de France in the UK.

The recent Active Travel (Wales) Act places new statutory duties on local authorities from September 2014. The Welsh Government intend to enable more people to walk and cycle so that they can experience the health benefits and support local economies. The County Council will be required to map the network of routes within their area that are safe and appropriate for walking and cycling to access work, education services and other facilities. It will also be expected to -

- identify and map the enhancements that would be required to create a fully integrated network for walking and cycling;
- deliver an enhanced network by securing new and improved “active travel” routes and facilities each year;
- take reasonable steps to enhance walking and cycling provision as part of new road schemes and in new developments.

The Council promotes and supports cycling through a number of initiatives:

Staff Cycle Leasing

A “salary sacrifice” Cycle to Work Lease Scheme is in place for employees. The scheme is cost neutral and enables the Council to promote healthier journeys to work and to reduce environmental pollution. The scheme has operated successfully for four years and, through the Council’s chosen provider - Cycle Solutions - it has recently partnered with local stores. This allows local cycle shops to supply bikes direct to the employee, helping to keep the £ in Powys. Of 54 cycles that were purchased in the March uptake – 50% of sales went to local dealers.

Staff Travel Incentives

A cycling allowance of 20p per mile has been introduced to encourage short and efficient business journeys to be made by bike and provide a saving on travel costs. A rolling programme has improved cycle parking facilities at Council buildings throughout the county and most now have suitable cycle storage, personal lockers and, at some locations, showers.

New Developments

All proposed developments over a certain size now have to include a site Travel Plan to meet Planning requirements and these Plans have to promote cycling and provide suitable facilities. New school developments, as recently in the Ystradgynlais area, have also to adopt a Travel Plan that shows a commitment to increase cycling by pupils and staff. Other schools may also have Travel Plans in place, notably where these have been introduced as a condition of ‘Safe Routes to School’ or ‘Safe Routes in Communities’ funding. It is a Welsh Government objective that Travel Plans are introduced to all schools.

Local Service Board (LSB) and other partners

The County Council’s Corporate Travel Plan has been awarded the Welsh Government’s Regional Consortium ‘Gold’ standard and the Council continues to influence and assist other Local Authorities in introducing ‘Cycle to Work’ schemes. The Council also holds the Corporate Health Standard at ‘Platinum’ level and the Corporate Travel Plan was the case study for this award in which cycling provision and initiatives played a key part.

Cycle Training Programme – Primary Schools

The Road Safety Unit offers every child the opportunity to complete cycle training before they leave Primary School. The course is based on the RoSPA “Righttrack” programme and is delivered over a period of 6 weeks. Approximately 1,300 children are instructed each year and wherever possible this will be through on-road training.

‘On Your Bike’ – Adult Training

The Road Safety Unit has just launched a new ‘On Your Bike’ scheme aimed at adults and which follows the National Standards Cycle Training programme. The course provides an hour of free assessment by a qualified Instructor and is available to anyone regardless of ability. It is intended to increase cyclists’ confidence & skills and to encourage more people to travel in a sustainable manner and make use of the county’s growing cycle networks.