



York Civic Trust

## **A Cycling Strategy for York**

### **Summary Paper**

### **April 2021**

This is a summary of our report, *A Cycling Strategy for York*. It is one of a set of seven modal strategy documents, written in the context of our earlier report *Towards a Transport Strategy for York*, and prepared as input to York's new Local Transport Plan, LTP4. We review cycling for all purposes, including freight, and for all users, and also consider e-cycles and e-scooters.

The government has been clear in its requirements that cycling take centre stage in all future city planning. It has asked the Council to develop a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). York has been slow to do so, and our report is designed to help accelerate that process. Cycling offers access for all, enhances public health and liveability, and supports public space, heritage and the economy. By providing an alternative to the car, it helps reduce carbon emissions, pollution and congestion, thus enhancing public health and safety.

York has been known as a cycling city in the past, but since 2014 there has been a fall of a sixth in the number of cyclists, despite an overall national rise. We have reviewed current trends and used the Propensity to Cycle tool to predict future trends and problems for cyclists. We have found that most people in York would like to cycle more but do not feel safe enough to do so under the current circumstances, and that funding has not been allocated to provide the necessary changes which would change these attitudes.

In 2018, cyclists accounted for 27% of all casualties in York despite accounting for around 10% of road users. Actual collisions on York's roads are concentrated in certain areas, and need to be tackled by changes to the road network, but the main issues in terms of getting people to start cycling are perceived danger and intimidation from other road users. York's cycle network is neither cohesive nor well maintained, and it is this which needs to be the focus, providing well-maintained, dedicated, barrier- and traffic-free paths, either off-road or separated from other road users. Priority must be given to cyclists over motorists in terms of space, positioning, and convenience.

We have proposed five specific targets to be achieved by 2027, and by 2037, when the Local Plan should be complete. They are: increasing cycling overall by 110% (80% by 2027); increasing cycling to work by 40% (20%); increase cycling to school by 40% (20%); closing the gender gap so that 50% (45%) of all cycle trips are made by women; and improving public perception so that 75% (50%) of residents consider York a good place to cycle.

The Government's recent papers, Gear Change and Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/20, set out the national standards for cycle infrastructure and soft measures. They offer clear, concise, evidence-based design recommendations, including "if necessary" alternatives where the full standard cannot be applied. We recommend that the Council follow these guidelines. It should start by defining a connected, continuous, city-wide network of cycle routes. It needs to identify the gaps in that network, and design solutions which accord to the standards of LTN 1/20. It needs to update its prioritisation procedures to ensure that priority is given to schemes which contribute most to connectivity, safety and provision to attract current car users to cycle. We emphasise the essential nature of maintenance, both of surfaces and of signs and markings, once these changes have been made. We also detail the importance of Council-backed training, education, and other soft measures.

We use the Government guidelines to offer detail on appropriate measures in specific areas of York. In the city centre we propose introducing a north-south and an east-west route through the city centre; permitting cargo cycles to use wider footstreets, and providing protected crossings of the inner ring road. Within the outer ring road we propose continuous cycle routes on all radial routes, and low traffic neighbourhoods to support orbital routes. We identify areas with high levels of short car journeys which could transfer to cycling. We argue that each of the villages should have a dedicated, protected cycle route to the city centre.

We consider the needs of different users but argue that all design should be focused on the least able, most vulnerable users, and be suitable for the largest and most cumbersome cycles, which will in turn make it suitable and accessible to everyone.

Schemes which promote cycling by reallocating road space can be unpopular, and politicians may be reluctant to implement them. It is thus essential that the need for them is made clear, by stressing the objectives which they are designed to achieve. Public opinion also influences the willingness of new users to choose to cycle. Increases in the numbers of cyclists and in the frequency with which they cycle will be critical if the strategy is to be successful, and the Council therefore needs to continue monitoring attitudes to cycling, and to publicise its benefits. Given the cost-effectiveness of the measures which we propose, the Council needs to specify and support a revenue budget sufficient to enable the programme to be funded, maintained and effectively enforced.

Our companion strategy for managing the road network is crucial to enabling these improvements to be made. Our strategies for managing car use and for improving walking and public transport need to be developed to complement our cycling strategy, to ensure that each sustainable mode is as effective as possible in attracting people out of cars. They and our strategy for freight need to ensure that cyclists are not in conflict with buses or lorries.

It has been proven time and again that, when urban cycling is not only safe and attractive, but also the most direct and accessible method of travel, people will inevitably begin to cycle more frequently. The crucial element is convenience. As across the world, York faces climate, obesity, and pollution crises, but raising the number of cycling citizens will provide a significant impact to all of these. Following our proposals will ensure that York can once again truly call itself a cycling city, and enjoy the many benefits this accolade brings.