

# Past successes in influencing Local Transport Plans

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In the context of LTPs success and influence are not the first words to spring to mind. Most of us have had to settle for less than demonstrably successful outcomes, but during the course of the LTP process many of us will have chalked up minor successes and along the way may have had been able to influence some of the thinking behind local transport policies.

I think it helps us if we consider success and influence in three stages

## 1. Input into the process

- Being involved in some way.
- Being able to respond to consultation as a rep for your organisation rather than just another member of the public.

Getting involved should not have presented problems. DETR guidance emphasised the importance of the process being inclusive and amongst groups to be consulted were “environmental organisations”. Some of you may have found, however, that your LA was trying to control the agenda – breaking out and making your points, preferably as a written submission, rather than answering their questions was important at this stage.

## 2. Input into the policy

- Your suggested policy additions or amendments to a draft were incorporated into the document(s).

This was not always obvious. You may have detected a change which was in line with something you and perhaps other like-minded respondents had said. You can fairly claim this as a success.

## 3. Improved outcome(s)

- The policies or amendments you proposed were implemented and resulted in real changes.

The local authority figures might indicate that more people are cycling, that implementation of travel plans at work and at schools had resulted in fewer car journeys to these places and you may rightly feel some ownership of these environmentally positive achievements. But you will find it hard to make a direct link between your efforts and these outcomes. The local authority will be less reluctant to claim ownership. Claim success - the fact that these things are happening at all is a success for the collective effort of which you are part.

## My approach to the LTP process

Was to get informed and engaged as early in the process as possible and to follow through, from the production of the provisional LTPs to the most recent Annual Progress Reports (APRs). This included the following –

- Being well briefed by my organisation.
- Attending an LTP training day.
- Obtaining copies of, reading and where appropriate responding to –
  - Provisional LTPs.
  - DETR guidance to Local authorities.
  - Full LTPs.
  - APRs.
- Attending meetings organised by the LA.

What was I able to influence? What was I able to introduce into the process?

I can point to two very different examples of where my input (together with that of others) influenced the written document(s).

### **Cycling strategies**

In their April 1999 Guidance on Provisional Local Transport Plans and their follow up March 2000 Guidance on Full Local Transport Plans the (then) DETR said *Local authorities will be expected to produce/update a local Cycling Strategy as part of their LTP.*

As a known CTC rep to both the LAs I was involved with, I was consulted directly during the drafting of these. DETR guidance was in fact that LAs “should consult at an early stage with representative local groups.”

In the case of Windsor and Maidenhead unitary Authority, I believe I was able to influence changes in the wording of a draft of the strategy, which was eventually published as a stand-alone booklet, as well as being summarised in the LTP itself.

I urged a change of emphasis away from special facilities (or specific routes) for cycling, towards a recognition that the entire highway infrastructure was our cycling facility. It was accepted that when they did produce cycling routes (whatever this meant in practice) that detours, time delays and access should be considered alongside safety.

With Bucks CC I was involved alongside several other CTC reps. Through previous contact the officer drafting the strategy was already aware of what needed to be said, and the hierarchy of solutions, as set out in *Cycle Friendly Infrastructure*, was already incorporated. Following discussion around the table and written submissions some amendments were, however, made to the draft document. Experience here demonstrated that involvement in the LTP process does not stand alone but is part of ongoing engagement to attempt to influence policies.

An interesting point which has broader relevance. DETR guidance was helpful in suggesting sources of information on which LAs could draw – ready made cycling strategies - but both authorities preferred to produce their own versions.

## **Rail station cycle parking**

A very different example. Bucks CC had already produced their LTP, but by regarding the LTP as an ongoing process and not a done deed once it was published, I was able to identify an opportunity to give more focus to cycling issues in subsequent APRs.

In their Rail Strategy under “Quality of the Interchange” Bucks CC had assessed cycle parking facilities at the 23 rail stations in the county. It took the form of a simple table, with quality being indicated by the number of ticks or Xs. It was clearly desk based and in my opinion did not begin to reflect the real situation. I decided we could do better, so I organised a team of CTC reps to do an audit. Using a standard form we noted the quality and quantity of cycle parking available at each station, and we also counted the number of bikes parked.

The findings were presented to Bucks CC with a covering report. They were impressed with our efforts to the extent that in the subsequent APRs numbers of bikes parked at rail stations became a performance indicator and we were asked to do the annual count – for which we are paid. In the 2000/01 APR our work was acknowledged and cited as an example of partnership working.

As a result of this initiative an officer from the county met one of the Train Operating Companies to discuss cycle parking provision at their stations.

I also managed to persuade Windsor and Maidenhead Unitary Authority that cycle counts at rail stations should be a performance indicator, but somewhat later in the process. Again we have done the cycle counts and the audits for them and our work has been acknowledged. An important finding from this audit was that commuting cyclists were prepared to pay well for secure parking facilities.

Getting the LAs to think seriously about the role which cycling can play in transport policy and getting through to them that encouraging cycling consists of more than providing what they like to call cycle routes, is an important positive step.

## **To conclude**

As it was we who raised cycle parking at rail stations as an issue any positive outcomes can be directly linked to our initiative.

Together with colleagues in Windsor and Maidenhead I continue to push for a more proactive stance on business travel plans, action on rolling out some of the many cycling schemes which we identified for them and a more professional approach to cycle training. Success, if and when it comes in these areas, will be difficult to claim as ours, as the link with our efforts will not be so clear-cut, but we will be very pleased.