

ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Tuesday 8 th December 2020
Report Subject	Update on the Mold to Broughton Cycleway Scheme & the development of the County Core Cycleway Network.
Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Countryside
Report Author	Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Flintshire County Council's Integrated Transport Strategy seeks to facilitate the integration of all modes of transport (walking, cycling, bus and rail) in order to enhance access to employment and services, improve connectivity between communities and key destinations whilst minimising the impact of transport on the natural environment.

Whilst the initial purpose of this report was to provide the Committee with an update on the Mold to Broughton Cycleway Scheme, interest raised during recent Scrutiny sessions in relation to the Council's wider strategic Active Travel aspirations has led to the expansion of this report to include an update on the progress made in developing the County 'Core' Cycleway Network.

The scheduled revision of Welsh Government's (WG) overarching Transport Strategy early next year, combined with the requirement for the Council to submit an updated Integrated Network Map (INM) for WG approval in December 2021, presents an ideal opportunity for the Council to re-evaluate its strategic aspirations for Active Travel, which will also be reflected within the subsequent revision of the Council's Integrated Transport Strategy in 2021.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Scrutiny acknowledges the progress made to date on the progression of the Mold to Broughton Strategic Cycleway Scheme, including the development of the County's strategic Active Travel schemes on the County's Core Cycleway Network.
2	That Scrutiny acknowledges the opportunity to extend the scope of the Mold to Broughton Cycleway Scheme to include Chester as the end destination and to support the submission of the rebranded 'Mold to

	Chester Strategic Cycleway Scheme' as the Council's Strategic Active Travel application to WG in the forthcoming financial year.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	Background
1.01	Flintshire County Council's Integrated Transport Strategy seeks to facilitate the integration of all modes of transport which includes bus, community transport, walking, cycling and rail. The Council's Strategy recognises the importance of developing schemes for all modes of travel and aims to improve connections to key destinations and markets, enhance access to employment and services, increase levels of walking and cycling, bring improved safety and security and at the same time, bring benefits and minimised impacts on the environment.
1.02	The Council has made great progress with the development of its Core Cycleway Network, however, it must be recognised that Active Travel forms only one element of a much wider Integrated Transport Strategy. The scheduled revision of the WG overarching Transport Strategy early next year will require all Welsh Authorities to revise their Joint Local Transport Plans (JLTP) in order to reflect WG desired direction for transport for the forthcoming 5 years. This in turn will instigate the subsequent revision of the Council's own Integrated Transport Plan in which the Council's aspirations for Active Travel will be defined.
1.03	<p>The Active Travel Wales Act, requires all Welsh Authorities to periodically update their individual Integrated Network Maps (INM) as well as the re-auditing of their Existing Routes Map (ERM) for WG approval, the next update is required for submission to WG before the 31st December 2021.</p> <p>Consultation on the Council's revised INM will commence early in the new year when Members and any other interested parties will be given the opportunity to put forward any recommendations on the content of the map.</p>
1.04	<p>Whilst the initial purpose of this report was to provide Scrutiny with an update on the Mold to Broughton Cycleway Scheme, interest raised during recent Scrutiny sessions in relation to the Council's wider strategic Active Travel aspirations has led to the expansion of this report to include the following scheme updates on the County's Core Cycleway Network;</p> <p>For ease of reference, a pictorial overview has also been provided in the form of 'Flintshire County Council's Strategic Core Cycleway Network Drawing' enclosed within Appendix 1 for information;</p>
1.05	<p>Mold to Rhydymwyn Active Travel Link.</p> <p>The Mold to Rhydymwyn/Afonwen Greenway was previously investigated by Flintshire County Council (FCC) with the aim of providing an off road cycleway linking between Mold and Rhydymwyn and eventually onto the Denbighshire border (Afonwen). Renewed interest</p>

has been raised in relation to opening a section of the old railway line between Mold and Rhydymwyn for Active Travel purposes and as such, engagement with landowners is about to commence.

Mold to Deeside Industrial Park (DIP) Strategic Cycleway Link.

FCC have recently commissioned consultants to investigate the feasibility of providing a strategic cycleway link between Mold, Sychdyn and Northop to both Flint and Deeside Industrial Park. The route will feed into the proposed Active Travel provisions at Northop interchange, which will be provided by WG as part of the planned Red Route/Flintshire Corridor highway improvements. The successful integration of all modes of the transport infrastructure in the area will be a key element of the wider North Wales Metro project.

Dee Coastal Path Cycle Improvements.

The Dee Coastal Path is a long term aspiration of the Council to provide a continuous cycleway providing a safe Active Travel link along the Flintshire coast between Cheshire and Denbighshire. Various sections of the Dee Coastal Path have already been delivered including Burton Point (Cheshire) to DIP Zone 4 and NCN 5 & National Cycle Route 563 - linking Deeside to Cheshire / Wirral. These links have proved to be very successful attracting over 110,000 users annually.

FCC are currently assessing the feasibility of developing the missing sections of the Coastal Path however, due to the nature of these locations, complicated consents and landowner agreements are required. FCC are therefore re-engaging with key stakeholders, including Sustrans, Natural Resource Wales and Flintshire County Council Countryside Services in order to address potential issues and to investigate the feasibility of alternative routes to overcome these challenges.

Greenfield Valley Walking & Cycling Links.

Consisting of a package of local improvements over a 3 year phased delivery programme, improving walking and cycling links through the Greenfield Valley to link Holywell with the coast has been an aspiration of the Town and Community Council and local residents for a number of years. Phase 1 & 2 have recently been completed which comprises of an Active Travel route through Greenfield Valley linking Holywell, Greenfield and surrounding communities and services.

The Council are currently in the process of delivering Phase 3 of the Holywell Town walking and cycling link via the Greenfield Valley Heritage Park to the Coastal Cycling/Walking Paths and Greenfield Business Park.

NMWTRA Active Travel improvements on the Flintshire Trunk Road Network.

The Council are working closely with the North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agency (NMWTRA) who are currently delivering a programme of Active Travel routes as part of ongoing improvements to the local trunk

	<p>road network. Phase 1 of the Aston Hill A494 Active Travel route improvement has recently been completed with Phase 2 to follow early next year. Planned future works include Active Travel routes along Mold By-Pass which will link to the Council’s Mold to Broughton strategic Cycleway as well as providing Active Travel improvements on Wylfa Roundabout.</p> <p>Buckley Town Centre Improvements – incorporating Active Travel Links</p> <p>A scheme aimed at improving transport links into Buckley Town Centre includes Active Travel links from Padeswood Road South and Buckley Station into the town centre. The scheme also aims to address historic parking issues on Mill Lane whilst also building upon the recently implemented Active Travel works on Knowle Lane which were delivered as part of a Safe Routes in Communities (SRIC) initiative in 2018/19 financial year. Whilst not identified as part of the original Study, it is important to note that the proposals in Buckley greatly compliments the Mold to Broughton Strategic Cycleway Scheme, ultimately linking the community of Buckley to key employment sites in Airbus, Deeside and beyond.</p>
1.07	<p>Mold to Broughton Cycleway.</p> <p>In May 2019, Scrutiny considered the attached report for the Mold to Broughton Cycleway Scheme as the Council’s strategic application for WG funding for the 2020/21 financial year for which a copy of the report has been enclosed within <u>Appendix 2</u> for reference. Despite the submission of a robust funding application which detailed the delivery of the scheme over a period of 3 years, it was disappointing that WG funding was not granted for the full scheme, which consisted of 7 individual sections.</p> <p>Following confirmation of this outcome, the Council has written to the Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport at WG, questioning the reasoning for this decision, to which the Council is eagerly awaiting a response.</p>
1.09	<p>Whilst the Authority has not secured funding for the delivery of the Mold to Broughton Cycleway scheme in its entirety, it has been successful in obtaining WG ‘Transforming Towns’ funding for delivery of the following sections of the route;</p> <p>Mold Town Centre Improvements – incorporating Mold to Broughton Route (Section 1)</p> <p>This scheme aimed at improving transport links into Mold Town Centre will incorporate an expanded package of Active Travel measures which were identified within the Mold to Broughton Cycleway Scheme.</p> <p>Measures include links from Mold Bus Station onto Tyddyn Street, Gas Lane and Bromfield Industrial Estate as well as providing links into the recently completed Bryn Coch (SRIC) and Maes Gwern Active Travel schemes. This proposal will provide an integrated Active Travel network</p>

	<p>linking the centre of Mold to the surrounding area whilst also complimenting a wider package of transport improvements for which are currently underway. It will also link to the NMWTRA cycleway on the A494, providing links to Mynydd Isa and Buckley.</p> <p>Sandycroft to Broughton (Section 7)</p> <p>WG North Wales Metro slippage funding has also been obtained for the progression of Route 7 Sandycroft to Broughton. Funding received will enable the purchase of required land and associated detailed design this financial year, which will enable a second funding bid submission to construct this key link to be made in 2021/22.</p> <p>Completion of this link will connect the communities of Deeside and Broughton whilst also providing continuity to the existing cycle infrastructure.</p>
1.11	<p>There has also been considerable progress in the advancement of schemes that connect to the Mold to Broughton strategic route.</p> <p>A scheme along the A5104 between Broughton and Saltney has recently been delivered and feasibility studies are currently ongoing for the following routes which will also feature in applications for funding in the 2021/22 financial year;</p> <p>South side of the River Dee – Cycle Path between Saltney and Connah’s Quay</p> <p>The Council are currently investigating the feasibility of providing a Cycleway provision on the South side of the River Dee linking between the existing National Cycle Network (NCN) 5 and NCN 568 (Hawarden Bridge) and on towards Saltney via Sandycroft. This route would then connect into the recently completed and proposed cycleway provision along the A5104 thus linking in to Airbus and Chester. The scheme will also link into the Active Travel provision on WG’s programed A494 Bridge improvement works.</p> <p>Saltney Ferry Road link between River Dee and A5104.</p> <p>The purpose of this scheme is to provide a link between the existing network NCN5 / NCN568 and the recently completed cycleway provision along the A5104 linking into Chester and Airbus. As per the south side of the River Dee proposal, the route also has the potential to extend northwards along Ferry Lane connecting in to the existing cycleway provision on the A548 Sealand Road, Chester.</p>
1.12	<p>Incorporation of the above proposals within the wider Mold to Broughton Strategic Cycleway scheme presents an exciting opportunity to extend the route as far as Chester, which will promote sustainable cross border travel for purposes of employment, leisure and retail.</p> <p>On the basis of the above, it is therefore proposed to ‘rebrand’ the Mold to Broughton Cycleway Scheme as the ‘Mold to Chester Strategic Active Travel Scheme’ and it is hoped Environment and Economy Overview and</p>

	Scrutiny Committee will support this proposal as the Council's strategic Active Travel application to WG in the forthcoming financial year.
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
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2.01	Whist the Council have a successful record of obtaining WG Grant funding, the progression of the Council's Active Travel Network will be dependent on success of future grant applications.
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2.02	Given the uncertainty of long term WG financial commitments as a result of the ongoing Covid pandemic, the implementation of the Mold to Chester Strategic Cycleway Scheme may now progress on an incremental basis.
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3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
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3.01	Long-term	Positive – The move to low carbon sustainable transport options aligns itself with the long term aspirations of The Environment (Wales) Act, The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act & The Air Quality Standards (Wales) Regulations. The concept is also strongly endorsed within the Council's Council Plan under the priority of a 'Green Council' for which is reinforced by the Council's approach to integrated and sustainable transport.
	Prevention	Positive – The development of sustainable transport options will reinforce the Council's commitment to climate change whilst also facilitating a vision for a zero carbon future as defined within WG legislation. Implementation of the required infrastructure will provide reliance to County's highway network and also boost the Council's status as a 'key player' within the region thus reducing the risk of public abandonment in terms of tourism, residential and business growth.
	Integration	Positive – The development of a multimodal integrated transport options is key to the success of a sustainable, integrated transport network.
	Collaboration	Positive – The continual development of a fit for purpose Integrated Transport Strategy will enable FCC to work with Local Authorities across the region in order

	<p>to standardise the provision of infrastructure.</p> <p>The nature of this approach recognises the importance of strategic cross-border movements to the local economy in terms of commuter movements, business and tourism.</p>
Involvement	Positive – Completion of studies thus far demonstrates the Council’s engagement with key stakeholders both cross border and within WG.
Well-being Goals Impact	
Prosperous Wales	The continual development of a fit for purpose Integrated Transport Strategy with an emphasis on sustainable modes will boost the Council’s status as a ‘key player’ within the region thus reducing the risk of public abandonment in terms of tourism, residential and business growth.
Resilient Wales	Positive - The continual development of a fit for purpose Integrated Transport Strategy is key to the success of a sustainable, integrated transport network.
Healthier Wales	Positive - The promotion and utilisation of active and sustainable transport modes provide obvious benefits to air quality through the reduction of Co2 emissions as well as improving people’s fitness and mental wellbeing. This approach will also greatly assist the Council to achieve decarbonisation targets set within Central and WG legislation.
More Equal Wales	Positive – Improved connectivity through the implementation of required infrastructure will benefit tourism, residential, business growth and inequality amongst deprived communities. Health benefits obtained from improved air quality and increased levels of exercise will benefit the Council’s most deprived communities, often associated with densely populated areas.
Cohesive Wales	Positive – The visible presence of active and sustainable transport options within the County will have a positive effect on public awareness whilst displaying the

		Council's outward commitment to climate change.
	Vibrant Wales	Positive – A move to active and sustainable transport modes will improve the quality and sustainability of the natural environment whilst providing benefits to the local and regional economy in terms of tourism, residential and business growth.
	Globally Responsible Wales	Positive - The continual development of a fit for purpose Integrated Transport Strategy will reinforce the Council's commitment to climate change whilst also striving to achieve a zero carbon future as defined within Central and WG legislation.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	In 2015 FCC held consultation events on the North Wales Joint Local Transport Plan. There were a number of requests for a safe cycling route to be provided between Mold and Broughton and as such this scheme was included in the Interventions within the North Wales Joint Local Transport Plan.
4.02	A proposal for a cycling/walking facility between Mold, Broughton and Deeside Enterprise Zone was also included on Flintshire's Integrated Network Map (INM) and Schedule which underwent informal engagement and a public consultation in 2017.
4.03	Consultation events with Town and Community Councils affected by the proposals have commenced with further consultation scheduled.
4.04	Landowner negotiation would be required for some route options.
4.05	Consultation on the Council's Active Travel INM is scheduled to commence in the new year.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1: Flintshire County Council's Strategic Core Cycle Network Drawing.
5.02	Appendix 2: - May 2019 Scrutiny report - Proposed Active Travel routes between Mold and Broughton and neighbouring settlements

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Flintshire County Council - Integrated Transport Strategy

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Stephen O Jones, Chief Officer. Telephone: 01352 704700 E-mail: stephen.o.jones@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>(1) Transport Strategy for Wales: A statutory document required by the Transport (Wales) Act 2006. The Act places a duty on the Welsh Ministers to prepare and publish a Wales Transport Strategy (WTS) setting out its policies and how they will be discharged.</p> <p>(2) North Wales Joint Local Transport Plan: A statutory document that will sit alongside the Local Development Plans and other policies and plans of each of the Local Authorities, once adopted. The plan sets out all of the six North Wales Local Authorities vision to ‘remove barriers to economic growth, prosperity and well-being by delivering safe, sustainable, affordable and effective transport networks’ and details this Council’s specific transport interventions and projects to achieve this aim.</p> <p>(3) Flintshire County Council Integrated Transport Strategy: An Integrated Strategy aiming to provide long term sustainable transport solutions through the successful integration of all modes of transport, which links to all of Flintshire and the wider region.</p> <p>(4) Active Travel (Wales) Act: A statutory document introduced in 2013, its purpose is to enable more people to undertake Active Travel for short journeys instead of using motorised vehicles where it is suitable for them to do so. An Active Travel route must be within a designated locality in a Local Authority area.</p>