



Blackburn with Darwen

Cycling Strategy:

An overview of the existing situation, and recommendations for the future scope and direction of a cycling strategy for the Borough Council

Rev. 2

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Introduction

In 2006 Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council (BwDBC) applied for assistance to review its cycling strategy under a programme of free consultancy advice and support for local authorities provided by Cycling England. Following an assessment of needs and commitment, the Borough Council was awarded five days of support, the maximum available to any authority outside the Cycling Demonstration Towns. Cycling England local authority support team member Jo Cleary (from Cleary Stevens Consulting) was appointed to work on this assignment.

Summary of tasks undertaken

Below is a summary of tasks carried out by the Cycling England (C.E.) consultant.

- Initial assessment of needs, in consultation with BwDBC's Transport Planning Officer and C.E. support applicant, James Syson. A summary of the outcomes of this assessment is contained in a separate C.E. form C3, while below is an extract from Blackburn's application for assistance that provides an outline of where the Borough Council felt it needed assistance.

"BwDBC fully recognizes the importance of cycling in terms of improving accessibility, health and social well being. Within the Borough cycling activity as a mode of travel is small, with less than 1% of all journeys being made by bicycle. Ultimately the opportunity to increase cycling activity is very high, although a number of real and perceived barriers need to be addressed. As part of our ongoing commitment to cycling the Council plans to update its Cycling Strategy, investigate how it can enhance child and adult training opportunities, as well as promote cycling for health, cycling for leisure, cycling to education and employment sites, and encouraging cycling among BME groups. Expert advice from Cycling England would be gratefully received as the Council seeks to develop a successful cycling strategy based on the many planned initiatives and existing cycling projects."

- Attendance at a meeting, convened by James Syson on 10th October 2006, entitled *BwDBC Cycling Strategy – the way forward*. The meeting was attended by the following:
 - Adam Scott, Director of Regeneration, Housing and Neighbourhoods, BwDBC
 - Chris Hayward, Forward Planning and Transport Policy Manager, BwDBC
 - John Ryden, Strategy Project and Development Manager, BwDBC
 - James Syson, Transport Planner, Forward Planning and Transport Policy, BwDBC
 - David Hudson, Technician, Transport Policy, Forward Planning and Transport Policy, BwDBC
 - Andrea Madden, Health and Fitness Development Officer, BwDBC
 - Joanne Croasdale, Public Rights of Way Officer, Capita
 - Peter van Eijsden, Road Safety Engineer, Capita
 - George Bell, Associate Director, Highways and Transport, Capita
 - Ian Robertson, Transport Planner, Capita
 - Nick Hughes, Traffic Team Leader, Capita
 - Robin Field, CTC Right to Ride representative
 - Alasdair Simpson, Senior Cycling Officer, Lancashire County Council
 - Dr Gifford Kerr, Consultant in Public Health, BwD PCT
 - Jo Cleary, Cycling England

Following the meeting there was a site visit, on foot, to inspect some of the measures that impact upon cycle movement in and around Blackburn town centre. This was led by Robin Field.

- Review of relevant background information/literature, including:
 - The initial *Blackburn with Darwen Cycling Strategy*, prepared in 1998.
 - *BwDBC Cycling Review*, a paper prepared by James Syson in advance of/preparation for the above meeting.
 - *Cycle Hire Facilities within East Lancashire*, a feasibility study commissioned by BwDBC and Lancashire County Council, carried out by Budgie Bikes in 2006.

- *Blackburn with Darwen Town Centre Maps Including Cycle Routes.*
 - ERCDT assessment on BwDBC's performance on cycling, November 2003.
 - ERCDT assessment on BwDBC's performance on cycling, 2004 progress review.
 - Relevant extracts of the BwDBC 2nd Local Transport Plan.
- More extensive tour of Blackburn by bike on 6th November, again lead by Robin Field, to gain a measure of the difficulties and opportunities for promoting cycling in the town. This was followed by interviews with a cross-section of key players in this field:
 - Robin Field, CTC Right to Ride representative
 - James Syson, Transport Planner, Forward Planning and Transport Policy, BwDBC
 - David Hudson, Technician, Transport Policy, Forward Planning and Transport Policy, BwDBC
 - Peter van Eijsden, Road Safety Engineer, Capita (responsible for the design of cycle routes and facilities)
 - Claire Waterhouse, Road Safety Manager, Capita (responsible for cycle training)
 - Councillor Andy Kay, Executive Member Regeneration (a keen cyclist)
 - The C.E. consultant drew together the information gathered from the meeting, literature review, site visits and interviews into a SWOT analysis, below, which summarises the **Strengths**, **Weaknesses**, **Opportunities** and **Threats** of the current situation in relation to the promotion of/provision for cycling in BwD.
 - In the light of the SWOT analysis, this report concludes with a set of recommendations which are intended to provide guidance on revamping and updating the Borough's 1998 Cycling Strategy, and a steer on what the priorities of the group newly formed to progress the Strategy, which first met on 10th October and is referred to above, might be.

The SWOT analysis

Strengths

- Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council acknowledges that cycling is an important issue, which supports a variety of policy objectives, and areas of local government responsibility. This is reflected in the Borough's second Local Transport Plan that includes, for example, the following bold statement: *"[The Council plans to develop a number of] schemes to link [residential] areas to the whole range of needed facilities including employment, leisure, education, retail and health in a traffic-free environment. Such schemes are essential in widening choice for citizens and promoting alternative sustainable travel. The development of an updated cycling strategy will highlight a series of priority schemes which must be implemented if traffic growth and car ownership are to be contained"*.
- BwDBC has quite an ambitious target for increasing cycle use in its second Local Transport Plan: using 2003/04 figures as the base data, the target in LTP2 is to increase the number of cyclists entering central Blackburn on a daily basis by 22% (from 325 to 414) by 2010/11.
- When BwDBC became a unitary authority in 1998 there were few dedicated cycling schemes in the area. From this low base relatively good progress has been made on implementing a number of routes and measures to assist cycling.
- One of the early tasks of the new BwD unitary authority was to prepare a Cycling Strategy, published in 1998. This was ambitious and forward-thinking, containing 14 policy objectives, some guidance on how these might be achieved, and a timetable for implementation. The policies included, for example, proposals for a network of cycle routes that would provide a route within 300 metres of 84% of all households within the Borough. While the Strategy, in its entirety, has not been progressed as much as anticipated (see weaknesses) it does, at least, demonstrate a firm commitment to cycling at officer and member level has existed within the Borough for many years.
- Despite staff and councillor changes since the late 90's, there currently exists some very dedicated individuals committed to promoting cycling through the Borough's remit and responsibilities. A good proportion have a personal interest in cycling, which enables their understanding of cyclists' needs and concerns.

- The Council's transport planner with lead responsibility for revitalisation of the Cycling Strategy is James Syson. His responsibilities cover a wide range of issues, including preparation and monitoring of the Local Transport Plan, cycling, walking, accessibility planning, and travel planning. This ensures he has had a good overview of the policy areas and opportunities to promote healthier and more sustainable travel options and of the existing and potential relationships between policy areas.
- A steering group has recently been established (mentioned in the introduction) to examine how the original Cycling Strategy can be updated and given new impetus.
- The Borough Council demonstrates a willingness to trial some innovative designs to facilitate cycling and overcome site-specific constraints. Examples include the central lane exit for cyclists from the Toucan crossing outside Blackburn College on Montague Street; and the push button control for cyclists on the carriageway at the eastern end of Church Street to enable them to 'trigger the green lights' when no motor traffic is present to do this on this arm of the junction to activate the signals.
- The Council is prepared to commission innovative research projects to explore cycling-related issues relevant to the area. For example, it is currently in the process of setting up research on how to encourage greater levels of cycling within BME communities, and hope a practical demonstration project will follow on from this. The results from this work will be useful and relevant to many other areas in the UK.
- A map of cycle routes in Blackburn and Darwen was published in March 2006. This includes contact details for local cycling groups (e.g. CTC, Sustrans, Blackburn and District Mountain Bikers), as well as public bodies with a responsibility for cycle promotion (e.g. school cycle training, Cycling for All initiative).
- "Cycling for All" was developed as an initiative within the Proactive Lifestyles Programme, a multi-agency partnership that delivers healthy lifestyle opportunities for residents aged 50+ in the Borough, and launched in 2003. The Cycling for All centre is based at Witton Park, providing equipment, expertise and a safe and pleasant environment for over 50s to try cycling. The initiative is partnered with Motorvate, a project providing physical activity and social opportunity for adults and children with learning difficulties, purchasing additional adapted cycles and equipment (e.g. Trammer mobility scooters) to meet special needs.
- Blackburn with Darwen's PCT seems keen to support the promotion of cycling as a form of exercise to improve public health.
- The Council has a very pro-active Road Safety Team Manager, based with Capita, who is keen to pursue a national standard cycle training programme for Blackburn, and the possibility of additional funding that this would attract. In pursuit of this objective, the Road Safety Manager led the Council's participation in a north-west pilot regional benchmarking of cycle training provision. The fact that the Council was prepared to commit relatively significant staff resources to this exercise is to be applauded, and it has resulted in exposure to other examples of good practice, together with opportunities for networking with other local authorities and providers. It has also yielded a useful Performance Improvement Grid, which identifies elements of the BwD training approach that the local authority should "Do more" (you do it well), "Stop doing" (it doesn't help), "Do differently" (it needs doing but it could be improved), and "Start doing" (it would help).
- In acknowledgement that some schools will not wish to run cycle training courses, the Road Safety team plans to offer holiday courses for affected children who wish to participate in such training.
- BwDBC has a travel plan which contains a strong endorsement for, and proposals for the promotion of, cycling as a means of travel for commuting and business trips among the local authority's staff and visitors. The travel plan seeks to reduce the number of single occupancy car journeys by 7% over the next five years. In order to achieve this target the Council has established over 40 aims/measures, a quarter of which relate to cycling.
- The Capita team based in Blackburn, who act as the Council's consultants' for the interpretation of policy into programme/scheme development and implementation, has a travel plan for its office in the town centre. There is a relatively new, purpose-built building that includes, for example: showers, changing facilities and a locker room, clothes-drying area, and secure undercover parking with CCTV surveillance. (Although the 'butterfly-style' cycle parking stands

should be replaced by Sheffield stands, which enable both bike frame and wheels to be secured, and are less likely to cause damage to bikes).

- BwDBC and Capita are planning to introduce a mileage allowance for business journeys by bike.
- The Borough Council established a Bicycle User Group in 2004. Unfortunately this no longer meets owing to work pressures of the individuals involved in coordinating the group. Nevertheless, the Council's travel plan has highlighted the importance of supporting a local authority BUG.
- The Council seeks to proactively engage with existing developments and local businesses to encourage improvements for cyclists, for example, the provision of showering, changing and parking facilities. There is a shower/changing facility in the toilets at the Beehive
- The authority also has a policy to require new developments, where appropriate, to develop a travel plan, which should include measures to facilitate and promote cycling.
- All development proposals within the Borough are subject to the Joint Lancashire Structure Plan's minimum cycle parking guidance (1 cycle space per 10 car parking spaces). Planning applications are required to include proposals for sheltered and secure facilities located close to the main entrance.
- Through consultation for the Accessibility Strategy and LTP2 the Borough Council has gained a good understanding of the real and perceived barriers to cycling, these are outlined among the 'weaknesses' and 'threats' sections below.
- The Council has provided short-stay cycle parking facilities (Sheffield stands) at several public locations across the Borough. There are plans to provide longer-stay, more secure, cycle lockers (or 'byke bins') at suitable locations, such as the central shopping centre car park and Waves leisure centre.

Weaknesses

- Many of the commendable policies within the original 1998 Cycling Strategy were never really progressed, largely due to lack of dedicated resources.
- The original Strategy raised expectations, and failure to fulfil these has caused frustrations between the local authority and other bodies and individuals who are keen to promote cycling, particularly sections of the cycling community.
- BwD Borough Council, like many local authorities, has experienced staff recruitment and retention problems in recent years. The Transport Planning team has been at least one member down (representing a 25% shortfall) for several years.
- In part as a result of this situation, the Borough Council transport planner with lead responsibility for cycling has many other roles/responsibilities. As mentioned under 'Strengths' above, while this enables a good overview of interrelated policy areas and initiatives, it can also lead to being 'a bit overstretched'.
- The Blackburn with Darwen cycle map consumed a relatively and unexpectedly high volume of resources to prepare and produce owing to the fact that this was the first of its kind and the base map held by the designers required significant alteration. Also, it contains a number of inaccuracies in places and, despite its 'youth' is already a little out-of-date.
- The mechanism for consultation on cycling-related issues, including feedback on why particular concerns and objections are not (apparently) acted upon, needs improvement.
- The development of the Borough's cycle route network has been somewhat sporadic, often in response to the opportunities presented through highway improvements, road safety schemes, and development control decisions, etc. While, on the one hand, capitalising on any opportunity to lever resources for improvements for cycling should generally be commended, it has tended to result in incremental infrastructure implementation, with routes sometimes appearing to 'end in the middle of nowhere'. This does little to enhance public confidence in the safety and appeal of cycling.
- The design of some provision for cycling is not ideal, sometimes as a result of site-specific constraints, sometimes due to poor attention to detail.
- Where special facilities have been implemented the focus has, understandably, been on provision for less confident and experienced riders, who are often prepared to sacrifice a degree of directness and priority for enhancements in perceived/actual safety. However, this has sometimes led to a deterioration in conditions for more confident and experienced cyclists who would

generally eschew 'facilities' that result in (what they consider to be) a significant compromise in priority and/or directness.

[Appendix 1 includes examples that illustrate the two previous points, along with some illustrations of where provision for cycling in Blackburn with Darwen has been done well.]

- A number of Capita engineers are diffident about the applicability of existing design guidance on cycling-related infrastructure to highway conditions in Blackburn with Darwen, and plan to create their own. For example, they consider the Lancashire standards, prepared in consultation with users and published in August 2005, do not offer sufficient guidance on dealing with the narrow roads prevalent in many parts of the Borough. Familiarity with other sources of guidance, such as the London Cycling Design Guidelines, and (draft) Cycle-friendly Infrastructure II, seems patchy.
- Despite plans to remedy the situation, the current lack of secure long-term cycle parking facilities at many public and private destinations within the Borough prevails. This undoubtedly discourages people from cycling for utility trips which would involve leaving their bike for any length of time at a destination, e.g. for work, education, or shopping trips.
- There are acknowledged question marks surrounding the reliability of the current system for monitoring cycle use in the Borough. In recent years cycle monitoring has been undertaken through an annual cordon count around Blackburn town centre. This approach has yielded varying results over the past five years: while there has been no overall reduction in cycle usage, it has not been possible to point to a strong growth trend. Overall the cordon counts have pointed to an 11% increase in cyclists entering Blackburn town centre over the last five years, with a pattern of steady rise over the first three years, followed by a decline in the last two.

○ 2000	261
○ 2001/02	302
○ 2002/03	425
○ 2003/04	325
○ 2004/05	294

These figures show quite wide annual variations, and it is felt, among some, that they do not represent an accurate picture of what is happening on the ground. Daily variations in cycle numbers may account for these fluctuations, which can be quite high depending on the weather conditions. Permanent cycle monitoring sites have been installed on the busiest cycle routes into Blackburn to help establish more reliable trend data to support the cordon count. But this is quite a recent innovation, and it will take several years to build up a picture of trends.

- Despite strong support for the promotion of cycling among individual councillors, such as Andy Kay the Executive Member for Regeneration, political support overall for the potential of cycling as a mode of transport within the Borough Council is rather disappointing.
- The current child cycle training programme, run by Capita for the Borough Council, is not always sufficiently closely linked with the school travel plan programme, also managed by Capita. The two work programmes are run by different departments within Capita, based on financial expedience rather than the most effective arrangements for delivery.
- The Borough Council has been implementing a Safe Routes to School project (package of physical measures within a school catchment area) each financial year. However, this is not specifically linked to the school travel plan programme, nor the delivery of cycle training, which is likely to leave school communities with little clear impression of the close potential relationship between these three areas of Council responsibility.
- Owing to resource constraints, there is currently limited support available for organisations wishing to develop and implement a travel plan.
- There is a general lack of cycle-related promotional activity for the general public within the Borough.
- The Cycling for All initiative based at Witton Park provides cycling opportunities on a booked session basis, with no current provision for 'turn up and cycle', even though there has been interest from the public for such as a facility.
- Awareness within the BME communities of the potential health benefits of cycling is very low, yet there has been little intervention in promoting the benefits of cycling to the BME community, which would need to take into account cultural sensitivities.
- Developers have not always implemented the cycling facilities promised as part of their planning application.

- Some of the earlier cycle schemes introduced in the Borough are of low quality (e.g. the Arran Trail), and should not be promoted without further improvement.
- While the canal towpath provides an attractive linear route through the Borough, it lacks good connectivity to the town centre.
- Cycle access to the retail area on the south side of the Preston-Colne railway line is poor.

Opportunities

- BwDBC faces significant health issues among its resident population, many linked to insufficient physical activity. Records for the 2001-03 period show the Borough had the lowest life expectancy for women, and the 24th lowest for men, in the UK. Death due to cardiovascular disease is the single largest contributor to the local life expectancy gap in both men and women. The latest data (for 2002-03) indicates that BwD residents have a 37% higher rate of death due to the disease than the average for England and Wales. Incorporating physical activity into the daily routine is the most effective means of ensuring it is sustained in the longer term. Encouraging people to make regular local trips by active travel modes, such as by bike, would be a very appropriate means of addressing this public health problem.
- 34% of households in the Borough have no access to a car.
- Distances between key destinations within the Borough are short, the majority of the population live within 1.5 miles of the Blackburn town centre.
- Currently BwD has a low modal share for cycling. Compared to the national average of 4% of commuter journeys made by bike, in Blackburn with Darwen the figure is only 1%. Similarly, of all journeys, 0.5% are made by bike in the Borough, compared to 2% nationally. From this low base, any increases can look quite impressive. For example, a rise from the current 1% of trips by bike to 2% represents a 100% increase in cycling!
- In recent years areas of central Blackburn have undergone significant public realm improvements, resulting in attractive streets where motor traffic is significantly restricted or eliminated. This has generally improved conditions for cycling in the affected areas, although there are locations where further advantage could have been secured for cyclists, and others where it is not always immediately clear whether cycle access is permitted or not.
- There has been quite extensive traffic calming in some residential areas of the Borough, which includes three Home Zones.
- There are relatively few large roundabouts in the area, a junction arrangement that poses a significant threat and level of intimidation to cyclists, and thus undermines the attractiveness of this mode.
- The Borough Council has managed to secure a number of physical improvements for cyclists through section 106 agreements, such as a link from the Royal Blackburn Hospital towards the town centre (although elements of the detailed design of this route have been subject to criticism from cycle users); as well as cycle parking facilities.
- Building Schools for the Future (BSF) will provide many opportunities to promote and facilitate cycle use among secondary pupils. BwDBC is seeking £150 million from the Government's 15-year BSF programme, which aims to "transform teaching and learning and provide buildings fit for the 21st century". The work will involve the closure of some schools, improvements and redevelopment of existing ones, as well as the construction of new facilities. There should be significant scope to 'build cycling in' to this programme through site-specific travel planning work.
- The Borough has a relatively good public transport network, including local stations at Blackburn, Darwen, Mill Hill, Cherry Tree, Pleasington and Entwistle. (Oswaldtwistle, Ramsgrave & Wilpshire stations are also just over the borough boundary). Opportunities for rail travel further afield include services west to Preston, Blackpool and Morecambe; east to Leeds and York; north to Clitheroe, Carlisle (via Preston); and south to Manchester. There is obviously considerable scope to promote bike and rail as a journey option within the area.
- In 2004 Lancs CC in partnership with Northern Rail, BwDBC and the Lancashire Economic Partnership commissioned the Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP) to review the option for establishing a Community Rail Partnership on the Preston to Colne line. The completed study recommended that a Community Rail Partnership would be the best way to initiate and develop a strategy for the future development of the rail line, as many similar lines have already benefited from a such as partnership approach, helping improve services and facilities and

increasing the number of people using the railway. One of the ideas to come out of the ACoRP report was the improvement of cycle links to the stations on the East Lancashire line.

- There is reasonable short-term, 'serpent-style', cycle parking at Blackburn station. (Although provision at the other stations in the Borough is non-existent.)
- BwDBC, in partnership with Lancashire County Council, commissioned a report in 2005 from Budgie Bikes to explore the potential for a network of linked cycle hire outlets across East Lancashire. The findings concluded that, under current circumstances, it would be difficult to establish a network of provision across all areas, in part due to a dispersed population, absence of a cycling culture, lack of a university, and the fact that area is not a tourist destination. However, the report mooted that there may be scope to develop a corridor along NCN Route 6, using Witton Park as a hub for cycle hire.
- While the Borough has a reputation of being quite hilly, there are opportunities to promote cycling along the valley bottoms and via 'contour routes'.
- College Campus growth / expansion provides an opportunity to realize good cycle approaches to the town centre from the west – the most likely route to achieve cycle use growth.
- National Cycle Route (NCN) Route 6 runs east-west through the Borough. The local element of NCN6 is complete between Pleasington and Accrington, and will be extended to Preston once Lancashire County Council has secured a preferred route.
- Part of NCN Route 6 between Blackburn and Accrington was, in 2006, chosen as one of the top 10 best bike routes in the British Isles according to a listing compiled by Halfords Financial Services in partnership with Sustrans.
- The Leeds and Liverpool Canal, a long distance NMU route, runs through Blackburn. The towpath between Accrington and Feniscowles has recently been surfaced, and lit in places, providing a level traffic-free route through the Borough.
- Blackburn and Darwen are surrounded by countryside which offers the chance to promote attractive, if somewhat challenging, leisure cycling opportunities. Mountain bikes, 'roadies' and cycle tourists are all drawn to the area to enjoy the 'thrill of the hills'.
- Blackburn is located half way on the most popular route used by Lands End to John O'Groats cycle tourists.
- The new West Pennine Moors Bridleway Loop, due for completion in March 2008, is intended to attract more leisure cyclists to the area.
- Some local parks would provide an attractive setting for family leisure cycle rides and confidence building. However, their use as such is often restricted, or prohibited because of bye laws.
- Despite its reputation as a hilly area, a number of relatively flat leisure routes do exist, such as Witton Park, the canal towpath, and Hyndburn Greenway, which can help encourage inexperienced cyclists.
- The 2006 *Discover Blackburn and Darwen's Countryside and Parks* leaflet contains information on a host of activities, many encouraging an element of physical activity. These include many walks, but only one cycling event to coincide with National Bike Week. Moreover, while the information on *Transport* mentions the availability of car parks, and encourages visitors to use public transport, there is no mention of cycling.
- Lancashire County Council has a very experienced, knowledgeable and supportive Cycling Officer, who is keen to work collaboratively with other local authorities to explore ways of facilitating cycle use.
- BwD's neighbouring local authorities are engaged in a number of initiatives to promote cycling, e.g. Hyndburn's Cycling for Health project, and Burnley's integration of cycling into its exemplar Housing Renewal Project in Danehouse. Partnerships could be fostered to pursue joint initiatives, share good practice, etc.
- Groundwork has an active presence in the East Lancashire area, and is keen to use its experience, knowledge and resources to promote cycle use for utility and leisure journeys. It has been contracted to carry out a number of cycling-related projects by BwDBC, such as interpretive signing on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal.
- The local CTC Right to Ride representative, Robin Field, has a very comprehensive knowledge of cycling issues in Blackburn and Darwen, and should offer a valuable source of information, and sounding board for ideas on measures to promote and facilitate cycling in the Borough.
- Elevate, a regeneration partnership, is involved in redeveloping areas of Blackburn, and is

proactively seeking to make provision for cyclists within these schemes.

- A wide range of non-LTP funding opportunities to provide for cycling do exist. What is required is an eye for identifying, and resources for capitalising on them when they arise.

Threats

- The topography of the Borough is quite challenging in many places for cycling, with steep hills within and surrounding the urban areas.
- The area has a reputation of receiving more than its fair share of rain.
- BwD Borough Council has, in common with many local authorities in recent years, experienced staff shortages, including within the transport planning department. This has impacted on the ability to progress policy objectives and meet performance targets within envisaged timescales.
- The Borough's roads are fairly busy and in places narrow, a situation exacerbated in many locations by on-street parking.
- The main roads tend to follow the best (evenly contoured and most direct) routes. Quieter road alternatives tend to involve additional hills.
- An assessment of the full impact on cycling of highway improvements and land-use developments is often lacking. For example, many recent employment and retail developments have been 'edge-of-town-centre', served by fast and busy roads, such as the Orbital Route and Town Moor gyratory system.
- The recently introduced traffic management arrangements in-and-around central Blackburn are, in places, somewhat confusing and 'counter-intuitive' (i.e. thwart desire lines), leading to road-users of all types making irregular and illegal manoeuvres.
- The rivers Darwen and Calder, the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, and the railway lines present barriers to cross-movements, funnelling cyclists (along with other) traffic onto/under a limited number of bridges, many of which feel constricted.
- The current low level of cycle use in the Borough presents difficulties in terms of identifying and satisfying (potential) cyclists' needs.
- There is a lack of cycling culture in Blackburn with Darwen, making the job of 'selling' cycling to an audience largely lacking in empathy, experience and any great enthusiasm, no easy task.
- Signage on cycle routes is prone to vandalism, particularly in the more deprived areas, and on routes away from the public highway. This undermines confidence in the signs that do exist ("Are they pointing the right way?"), and reinforces the impression of cycling as an unattractive form of travel.
- There is currently no cycling pressure or campaign group in Blackburn or Darwen, with which the Borough Council and Capita could engage to work collaboratively towards effective measures to promote cycle use.
- The Borough has a relatively high proportion, around 22%, of BME (Black and minority ethnic) groups among its resident population. Experience here, and elsewhere in the UK, suggests it is especially difficult to encourage members of such groups to consider cycling for transport or recreation. Adult BME group members, in particular, tend to consider this mode of travel unattractive or irrelevant. Also, elements of the BME community tend to be characterised by large family groups accommodated in terraced housing, in which it would be difficult to find storage room for cycles.
- Where efforts have been considered/made to raise the appeal of cycling to ethnic minority groups, such as a form of activity to combat health problems, there are often cultural issues, such as dress codes, that can be difficult to overcome.
- Research has shown that many residents in the Borough, particularly those without any, or any recent, experience of cycling, are discouraged from using this mode due to concerns over safety and security of riding both on- and off-road.
- The lack of long-stay secure cycle parking facilities at many key destinations, including schools, colleges, work sites, retail areas, community, leisure and sports centres, etc., is discouraging cycle use.
- The Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme will ultimately lead to greater pupil choice in the schools they attend, with some attending lessons at different schools. Without careful management of the impact of these increased choices on pupils' travel footprint, the programme could have very negative implications on the volume of motorised transport undertaken by pupils.

- Again, research has indicated that cycling is currently not considered 'cool' among the younger generation of the Borough: 40% of 16 and 17 year olds in Blackburn are non-white.
- Almost certainly linked to the lack of local cycling culture, and the fact that cycling is outside the recent experience of the majority of the adult population of the Borough, there is a tangible lack of care and courtesy shown by drivers to the minority who do use this form of transport. The inconsiderate and, at times, aggressive behaviour towards cyclists shown by some drivers, including those of commercial passenger vehicles (buses and taxis), compared with that experienced by the consultant in towns where cyclists are more common, will be particularly damaging to efforts to nurture novice and less confident riders.

Recommendations

From attendance at the meeting to explore how the Blackburn with Darwen Cycling Strategy could be revitalised, the site visit and discussions with a cross-section of interested parties, it is clear to the Cycling England advisor that there exists significant potential to further facilitate and encourage cycle use within the Borough Council area. What is required is a focus of attention on building on existing strengths and exploiting potential opportunities, while trying to redress identified weaknesses and mitigate the threats to this objective. Below are some pointers as to how this might be achieved. [It should be borne in mind, however, that the contents of this report, including the recommendations below, were researched and developed within a very short timescale, thus the information should be viewed as a strategic overview, rather than a detailed and comprehensive analysis of the current situation, and the scope for future progress.]

- Establish a working group (already initiated with the meeting on 10th October) to develop and facilitate the implementation of a revamped and updated Cycling Strategy for Blackburn with Darwen. The group should comprise relevant key officers and members from the Borough Council, together with Capita staff engaged in facilitating cycle use, as well as representatives from interested external bodies, such as the PCT, and (ideally) a cross-section of representatives from the cycling community.
- Foster better and broader engagement with the existing (and potential) cycling community by, for example, seeking representation on the Cycling Strategy working group from:
 - an employer engaged in travel planning activity (e.g. BAE Systems, who used to have relatively high numbers of cycle commuters.)
 - the higher/further education sector, e.g. Blackburn College
 - a recreational cycling club.
- As a starting point, it is suggested that the membership of the working group should include:
 - Councillor Andy Kay, Executive Member Regeneration, BwDBC
 - Adam Scott, Director of Regeneration, Housing and Neighbourhoods, BwDBC
 - Chris Hayward, Forward Planning and Transport Policy Manager, BwDBC
 - James Syson, Transport Planner, Forward Planning and Transport Policy, BwDBC
 - Andrea Madden, Health and Fitness Development Officer, BwDBC
 - Claire Waterhouse, Road Safety Manager, Capita (responsible for cycle training)
 - Joanne Croasdale, Public Rights of Way Officer, Capita
 - Peter van Eijnsden, Road Safety Engineer, Capita
 - Robin Field, CTC Right to Ride representative
 - Dr Gifford Kerr, Consultant in Public Health, BwD PCT
- In due course the 1998 Cycling Strategy document should be rewritten to provide a policy framework, as well as a set of shared objectives and targets, for the working group to progress. It would be helpful to include, as the original did, a timetable against which progress towards meeting objects can be gauged, but also an indication of the resources required (and likely to be available) to help meet these objectives.
- It is strongly recommended that, before significant resources and staff time is invested in producing a Blackburn with Darwen cycling design guide, a thorough review of applicability and adaptability of existing guidance is carried out. The review should include: Lancashire – The Cyclists' County: A code for planning, designing and maintaining roads and tracks for cyclists; the London Cycling Design Standards; the DfT's Cycle-friendly Infrastructure (currently in draft form); relevant Local Transport Notes; etc. All these resources have been well researched, and

recommend tried and tested approaches to providing for cycling, based on available best practice taking account of the physical constraints that exist in many urban areas.

- Notwithstanding the previous point, site-specific constraints often necessitate a degree of adaptation, sometimes compromise, in interpreting design guidance for cycling. In response, what many local authorities and consultancies are finding useful, is staff and member training on optimising conditions for cyclists. Cycling England have appointed PTRC to manage the delivery of a suite of 11 training modules on providing for cycling, aimed primarily at local authorities and consultants engaged to work alongside them. [Information on this training package will be provided to BwDBC under separate cover.] It is strongly recommended that the Borough Council consider commissioning the training, possibly in partnership with neighbouring authorities to spread the cost.
- The Blackburn with Darwen cycle map should, as resources permit, be updated to include further additions to cycle-specific infrastructure, together with a wider network of quieter roads suitable for cycling. It might be appropriate, for example, to have a 'slightly busier' category of roads suitable for more confident and experienced cyclists. The ultimate aim being to build up a Borough-wide picture of those places where a reasonably competent cyclist would be prepared to cycle, along with connections to routes outside the borough. The cycle maps produced for London and Kettering offer inspiration and ideas about how this task could be approached. This could also be a web resource.
- Experienced cyclists, with good local knowledge, should continue to be consulted to help determine the contents and accuracy of the revised map.
- Encouraging employers and schools to develop travel plans is an effective way of 'adding value' to a local authority's efforts. It is useful for gathering information on travel patterns, and monitoring changes to these over time, perhaps following implementation of measures to promote more sustainable modes. Travel planning techniques can also be used to assess cycle desire lines, and can often be a valuable source of ideas for incremental/simple/quick win solutions to facilitate cycling relevant to a site-specific location.
- One means of encouraging wider take-up of travel planning activity, mindful of existing BwDBC staff resource constraints, might be to offer part-funding to organisations willing to implement on-site pro-cycling measures, following a survey of what existing and potential users would most appreciate.
- Explore the potential for other funding sources to support the efforts of organisations to make their sites more cycle-friendly. Sustrans, for example, may be willing to part-fund links from the National Cycle Network.
- It would also be relatively inexpensive to develop, for employers (and educational establishments, if not done already), a pro-forma travel survey questionnaire and (Excel) database for the analysis of results. This would enable the collation of information of use to both the site occupier as well as the Borough Council, in a standardised format.
- Continue to develop and implement the most appropriate measures to further promote cycling for both commuting and business journeys among BwDBC staff via the Council's travel plan.
- Introduce a cycle mileage allowance for BwDBC and Capita staff who carry out business journeys by bicycle, and encourage other local businesses to do the same. The Inland Revenue recommends 20p per mile as a fair (and non-taxable) rate.
- Through their professional operations, as well as their communications with staff, visitors, partner organisations and the public at large, both the Borough Council and Capita should be setting a good example in the arena of travel planning. For example, public town on how to access venues owner/occupied by these organisations should always include information on, and endorsement of, cycling.
- A programme should be developed to provide more long- and short-term cycle parking facilities in public places and at public buildings, at appropriate locations throughout the Borough.
- Work with the strategic rail partnership to explore options for promoting a combination of bike and rail travel for both utility and leisure trips. A priority would be to provide secure and sheltered parking at stations, perhaps a combination of lockers and covered Sheffield-type stands to cater for both long- and short-term use. Any lockers would need careful management to ensure their use is not abused.
- Further progress towards the above objective is likely to include improved cycle links to stations in and around the Borough, as recommended in the ACoRP review (mentioned under

'Opportunities'). Other measures might include the provision of information and promotional material encouraging people to consider the options for combining bike and rail travel, e.g. the availability and location of bike parking facilities stations, and the opportunities for bike carriage on trains. [It is considered that these types of measures would be more cost-effective and sustainable in the East Lancashire setting than a cycle hire scheme, which has been mooted as a possible means of encouraging combined bike and rail trips.]

- Encourage and assist Blackburn College to develop and implement a travel plan. It is reasonably well served by sustainable travel options, including cycle routes.
- Coordinate and integrate more closely the Safer Routes to Schools programme of investment in physical measures, pupil cycle training, and school travel plan work. The close links between these three areas of Borough Council work should become more obvious and well established. For example, if resources for training are limited, it might be appropriate to give priority to those schools that have/are working towards the development of a travel plan. Or, where Safe Routes to Schools measures have been implemented that assist cycle users, the completion of the scheme could be followed by the delivery of cycle training for pupils at the affected school(s).
- Action should be taken on the recommendations of the Performance Improvement Grid, which resulted from the Borough Council's participation in the north-west regional benchmarking of cycle training.
- Consideration should be given to developing and rolling out a cycle training programme for adults, based on national standards (possibly in combination with the following recommendation).
- Building on recommendations of Budgie Bikes report, develop Witton Park as a focus for organised cycling activity and promotional events in the Borough, including: child and adult cycle training, the Cycling for All initiative, a GP referral scheme. Also develop complementary activities, such as led local rides and/or a family of leaflets on leisure rides in and around the park, including information on local history, wildlife, refreshment opportunities, etc. This would help underpin the viability of a commercial 'turn up and go' cycle hire operation, for which Budgie Bikes has already carried out some feasibility work.
- Develop a road-user awareness campaign, perhaps in cooperation with commercial operators such as bus companies, taxi and delivery firms, etc, to increase respect for cyclists and better understanding of their particular needs and vulnerability as road users. The campaign should also provide guidance, for all road users, on the function of cycle facilities like ASLs and advisory cycle lanes, and how to respect them.
- The likely commissioning in late 2006 of a research project to look at how cycle use could be encouraged among BME communities, should be seen as an opportunity by BwDBC to develop 'intelligence of much wider significance', maybe even develop a reputation as a national centre of pioneering work in the area.
- Techniques to provide a more accurate and detailed picture of levels of cycle use across the Borough should be developed. Perhaps combining cordon counts with findings from school and employee travel surveys.
- Consider research, possibly in association with ELEVATE, to explore the issues surrounding bike storage in terraced housing and flatted accommodation, and recommendations for overcoming identified problems.
- Introduce a vulnerable road user audit for all highway and land-use developments.
- Ensure that the development control process is fully utilised to create provision and advantage for cycling. Where on- or off-site cycle facilities have been promised as part of a development, the implementation of measures of sufficiently high quality should be monitored.
- Identify opportunities for more high profile publicity and marketing of cycling, perhaps in combination with other national or regional planned cycling promotional events, such as National Bike Week, Bike to Work/School Day, Car-free Day, etc. Where appropriate, use the completion/opening of an individual initiative, such as a section of cycle route or site-specific facility, as a 'hook' upon which to hang some awareness-raising activity.
- Particular focus could be given to the communities situated around the town centre to promote cycling as an alternative mode of transport when making local journeys. These neighbourhoods are with a short distance of many trip destinations, yet many are among the most deprived wards in the Borough, with high levels of multiple health problems, including cardiovascular disease as a result of insufficient physical activity.