



# **County Durham Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy**

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# County Durham Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 What is a Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy?

Under the School Information (England) Regulations 2008 the Local Authority is required to publish the general arrangements and policies in respect of transport for pupils of compulsory school age to and from school, 6<sup>th</sup> form centres and FE colleges.

Changes to legislation brought about by the introduction of the Education and Inspection Act 2006 place a general duty on Local Authorities to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport.

There are four main elements to the duty:

- An assessment of the travel and transport needs of children and young people within the authority's area;
- An audit of the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within the authority that may be used when travelling to and from or between schools/institutions;
- A strategy to develop the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within the authority so that the travel and transport needs of children and young people are better catered for;
- The promotion of sustainable travel and transport modes on the journey to, from and between schools and other institutions.

### 1.2 What does the Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy do?

Durham County Council has a large number of existing strategies and policies which set out what all agencies and services have committed to achieve for the children and young people of Durham. These have been based on a thorough analysis of needs and on the things that schools, parents, children and young people themselves have told us matter most to them.

The Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy acts as a framework document pulling together all relevant strategies and policies into one document. It enables Durham County Council to develop a more integrated approach across agencies and County Council services to improve outcomes for children and young people and to ensure they have safe and equitable access to education. It provides an important source of information for parents on travel options when they are considering their preferences for particular schools.

## **2. NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL POLICIES**

The Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy also takes account of local, regional and national government transport policies.

### **2.1 National**

The Department for Transport published 'Creating Growth, Cutting Carbon – making sustainable Local Transport Happen' in January 2011. The White Paper represents a significant step forward towards meeting two key and interrelated government objectives; creating economic growth whilst cutting carbon emissions. This supports the approach to long term transport planning set out in 'Towards a Sustainable Transport System (2007) – Supporting economic growth in a low carbon world.'

A coherent local plan is being encouraged to reduce carbon emitted from transport. It is recognised that the private car is the only real choice for some journeys particularly in rural areas. A strategy which recognises this role is essential to encourage the steps to economic recovery and carbon reduction which include

- Decentralising economic power through the Regional Growth Fund, local Enterprise Partnerships and tax incrementing finance.
- Decentralising land use planning through a new planning policy framework.
- Improving transparency and accountability.
- Simplifying Local Transport funding: through the LTP process, Local Sustainable Transport fund, capital block for highways maintenance and a £1.5billion major schemes investment.

The Government encourage local authorities to work alongside national regional and local organisations, to deliver a system enabling choice with better information and education. Choice will include more opportunity for active travel (cycling and walking); public transport will become more attractive for example through investment in smarter ticketing, and traffic will be managed effectively to reduce carbon emissions.

### **2.2 Regional**

The Regional Transport Strategy is contained within 'Delivering a Sustainable Transport System' (DaSTS) (June 2009), which has been prepared as a regional response to the Department for Transport.

This document brings together the current regional policy and strategy framework through three documents.

The Integrated Regional Framework has five key aims and objectives, which are to:

- balance the economic requirements for national and international travel with the need to reduce carbon emissions;
- develop sustainable transport networks to support rural communities, taking account of changes to public services;
- embed sustainable transport within local development frameworks, including encouragement of the production of sustainable travel plans;

- implement learning across the region from Darlington's participation in the national Sustainable Travel Town's programme and promotion of cycling initiatives; and
- encourage the use of ICT as an alternative to travel, including potential for home working and changes to travel patterns to increase efficiency and reduce carbon emissions.

Within the DaSTS regional document, the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Regional Economic Strategy also set out a shared vision for the future of the North East; this states that:

*'The north east will be a region where present and future generations have a high quality of life. It will be a vibrant, self reliant, ambitious and outward looking region featuring a dynamic economy, a healthy environment and a distinctive culture. Everyone will have the opportunity to realise their full potential'.*

The DaSTS document outlines a work programme, which is subject to approval from the Department of Transport that consists of the following:

#### **Thematic Studies**

- 1.1 Transport Futures Package
- 1.2 Modelling
- 1.3 Capacity and Project Management

#### **Cities and Regional Network Studies**

- 3.4 Links between the regions
- 3.5 Rural Study

The results of the studies will compliment the existing evidence base consisting of recently completed studies and lead to development of a regional sustainable transport system.

## **2.3 Local**

### **2.3.1 Durham County Council Vision**

Since becoming a unitary authority, the Council has refocused its vision and priorities together with partners and in consultation with local people and Area Action Partnerships (AAPs). The Council has developed a new vision to reflect the views and aspirations of the community and opportunities for improvement. This is focused around an **Altogether Better Durham**.

This vision comprises two components being to have **an Altogether Better Place** which is **Altogether Better for People**.

This vision helps to provide a framework which guides all of our detailed plans and programmes which will turn our vision into a reality. This is achieved through organising our improvement actions into a structure comprised of five priority themes:

**Altogether wealthier** – focusing on creating a vibrant economy and putting regeneration and economic development at the heart of all our plans;

**Altogether healthier** – improving health and wellbeing;

**Altogether safer** - creating a safer and more cohesive county;

**Altogether better for children and young people** – enabling children and young people to develop and achieve their aspirations, and to maximise their potential in line with Every Child Matters;

**Altogether greener** – ensuring an attractive and ‘liveable’ local environment, and contributing to tackling global environmental challenges;

This vision is shared by our partners and forms the basis of the new Sustainable Community Strategy.

### 2.3.2 County Durham Sustainable Community Strategy

Focusing on:

- Improving transport links
- Accessible and safe public transport
- An effective and reliable transport network
- High quality, safe, sustainable transport environment

### 2.3.3 The Children, Young People and Families Plan

The Children, Young People and Families Plan is the single overarching, multi-agency plan for the delivery of priorities for children and young people in County Durham. The responsibility for producing it rests with the Children and Families Partnership for County Durham.

The vision for the Children, Young People and Families Plan is: *‘All children, young people and families believe, achieve and succeed’*. To achieve this vision, three Strategic Objectives have been agreed by the Children and Families Partnership, along with ten outcomes. The following objectives were agreed by the Children and Families Partnership:

- Children and young people realise and maximise their potential
- Children and young people make healthy choices and have the best start in life
- A Think Family approach is embedded in our support for families.

Transport is a cross-cutting theme.

### 2.3.4 The Local Transport Plan

Durham County Council is required by the Transport Act 2000 to produce and maintain a Local Transport Plan (LTP). The LTP provides details of local transport policies and priorities along with an implementation programme of schemes and measures to improve transport.

The structure of the Plan reflects the five 'national transport goals' each of which has a number of related challenges. These goals and challenges were developed by the DfT following a period of national consultation. We have also included a sixth goal 'Maintain the Transport Asset' reflecting the importance we place on a quality transport infrastructure and highway network. The goals are:

- A Stronger Economy Through Regeneration
- Reduce our Carbon Output
- Safer and Healthier Travel
- Better Accessibility to Services
- Improve Quality of Life and a Healthy Natural Environment
- Maintain the Transport Asset

Although the DfT expects authorities to consider their contribution to these goals as over-arching priorities for the LTP, it is important that the local perspective is given the weight and consideration it deserves. The emphasis therefore in the LTP is to provide a transport strategy and deliver a plan that supports the primary goal of a stronger economy through regeneration in County Durham. Secondary priority is afforded to maintenance of the transport asset and reduction of our carbon output.

The main chapters examine the key issues, supporting evidence, interventions and priorities for the first three years of the plan period together with how we intend to measure progress for each of the goals.

The LTP identifies a number of interventions which lead to more sustainable travel, those which address multiple goals include:

- Provide or improve walking and cycling routes and facilities
- Support use and redevelopment of existing railway assets
- Targeted public transport publicity campaigns
- Increase awareness and use of Traveline
- Personal and workplace travel planning
- Improve bus infrastructure
- Car club and car sharing initiatives

In addition to these, the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (Paths for People) (ROWIP) and the Cycling Strategy are closely linked with the LTP.

In compliance with the DfT guidance, the Sustainable Community Strategy is the primary document that should influence local transport plans but the LTP also needs to take cognisance of a number of other strategic documents across the new authority, notably the Regeneration Statement and the County Durham Plan - the local development framework for the county.

### **2.3.5 County Durham Joint Health and Well-being Strategy**

The JHWS is a document that informs and influences decisions about health and social care services in County Durham, so that they are focused on the needs of the people who use them and tackle the factors that affect health and wellbeing, for example drugs, alcohol, unhealthy weight, mental and physical wellbeing.



Several areas directly relate to this Strategy and link it to for example, the ROWIP, Cycling Strategy and the LTP.

### **2.3.6 Climate Change**

Durham County Council is committed to tackling Climate Change through mitigation by reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions across the county, and adaptation, by ensuring we can cope with the effects of extreme weather conditions caused by elevated levels of CO<sub>2</sub> already in the atmosphere.

In 2008, Durham County Council set itself a 40% reduction target (based upon a 1990 baseline) by 2020 for all emissions across the whole of County Durham. To support this, in February 2009 the County Council signed the European Covenant of Mayors, committing the Council to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 20% by 2020 (from a 2005 baseline). To achieve these targets, they both require action targeted at reducing transport emissions.

Durham County Council also has in place a carbon management plan to reduce its own emissions by 40% and as part of this they seek to actively reduce emissions from all business travel and their own fleet. The plan also ensures that the Council works with contractors to ensure that they are aware of their emissions, that they are quantified and that they, along with the County Council, are taking steps to reduce them.

Durham County Council has also produced a County wide Climate Change Strategy. The strategy sets out the clear vision and objectives of the County Durham Partnership that will take us to a low carbon County. The strategy is focused around 7 key themes of which 'transport and infrastructure' is a key element. The Climate Change Strategy maps current emissions and sets targets based upon specific energy consumption within the County. This includes Home to School emissions, which will be required to reduce by more than 20% from 1990 levels. This Policy encourages the use of alternative fuels for transport.

A comprehensive climate change adaptation risk assessment on the potential impacts on council services has been carried out and is currently being looked at to integrate into council services. The impacts of road infrastructure including bridges and the affects on services are detailed within the LTP.

### **2.3.7 Durham County Council Bus Strategy**

This strategy was approved by Cabinet in January 2009 with the primary focus on managing bus services, a viable alternative to the private car.

Using the priorities set out in national and regional strategies, Durham County Council believes that a comprehensive bus network has an important role to play in offering:

- Solutions to traffic congestion;
- An alternative journey to the private car;
- Increased social inclusion;
- Better accessibility to services;

- The creation of a safer and better environment.

The current comprehensive bus network is made up of a range of different types of services, each of which offers different solutions to a range of problems. Because there is not a 'One size fits all' strategy, to obtain the best solutions, it follows that the strategies are tailored to each type of service.

Three different types of services have been identified and each has a separate strategy and role to play in delivering different elements of the key objectives.

### **2.3.8 Durham County Council's Cycling Strategy**

This strategy sets out specific targets in an Action Plan which will be implemented over the life of the strategy, for the development and promotion of cycling. The strategy's vision is "to make County Durham a centre of excellent cycling facilities where cycling is enjoyable, safe and viable for short journeys and as a healthy recreational activity".

### **2.3.9 Durham County Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)**

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) is a statutory document that enables Highway Authorities to create a more modern access and rights of way network. The ROWIP is closely aligned with the LTP and the Cycling Strategy.

The network provides more than 3,650kms of opportunities for walking, cycling and riding for travel, recreation and enjoyment across County Durham.

Amongst other benefits, improvements to the access and rights of way network help to provide sustainable means of travel to work, school and key services and reduce the reliance on cars and contribute to the quality of people's lives, their fitness, health and wellbeing.

All of the 6 objectives are relevant to sustainable travel and the ROWIP includes an action plan which details how these objectives will be delivered.

## **3. IDENTIFICATION OF NEED**

### **3.1 Data**

Durham County Council gathers information as to the current methods of travel to schools and academies. Hands-up surveys are regularly taken in schools .

The data is published in the Primary and Secondary School Admission Guides for Parents (available on the Council's website).

### **3.2 Accessibility Strategy**

As part of the accessibility planning required by the DfT Durham County Council has developed an Accessibility Strategy based on the findings of a Strategic Accessibility Assessment. This assessment considers accessibility by public transport across the County to key services to include education (schools and post-

16 establishments) and employment and assists the Council in discharging its duties and responsibilities arising from the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

## **4. CURRENT AND FUTURE SOLUTIONS**

In developing and implementing the sustainable modes of travel strategy the Council and its partners are tasked with balancing the objectives of national and local strategies on the delivery of high quality education services accessible to all children and young people, on the provision of a safe transport system, on improving health through increased levels of active travel (walking and cycling) and on reducing the impact of travel to education on the environment.

Parents, children and young people place a high priority on the provision of good quality travel infrastructure. This includes a safe environment for walking or cycling and safe and reliable school bus or public transport service.

The County Council already has in place, and is working towards, a number of strategies within Home to School/College Transport that should contribute to meeting the objectives of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, Children, Adults and Families Plan and Local Transport Plan.

### **4.1 School Travel Plan Strategy and Plans**

All schools were required to have a School Travel Plan by March 2010. The Travel Plan sets out how the school intends to tackle non-sustainable travel associated with their operations, reduce car dependency and promote healthy and sustainable travel. The main means by which this is achieved is by encouraging walking or cycling to school; for greater distance the use of public transport; and finally, as a last resort, car sharing.

Now that all schools have a Travel Plan the emphasis has moved to supporting schools in achieving the significant modal shift that will bring about sustainability in school-related travel. The Council offers support and resources through the Travel Planning Team and, in particular, web-based resources.

Through successful bids to the Department for Transport's Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF). we have offered some intensive support to selected schools in the South Durham Area (Bishop Auckland, Shildon and Newton Aycliffe) and around the primary routes into Durham City.

In South Durham, the Local Motion project is working with schools to encourage all modes of sustainable transport. Reducing traffic around schools ties in very well with the overall aim of the LSTF project to improve local economies by reducing congestion. In the Durham City area, we are working in partnership with the charity Living Streets to deliver a project specifically aimed at increasing walking to primary and secondary schools. Again this will reduce congestion and bring economic benefits to the areas served by these primary routes. Schools throughout the county are also encouraged to participate in either or both of the Walk to School campaigns:

- National Walk to School Week is in May.
- International Walk to School Month is in October each year.

## **4.2 Home to School and College Transport Policy**

The most up to date policy is published on the Council's website.

## **4.3 CCTV**

The Local Authority, in partnership with bus operators, promotes the installation of CCTV to safeguard pupils travelling on dedicated school buses and public service vehicles.

## **4.4 Modal Shift**

### **4.4.1 Modal Share of Journeys to School**

The National School Census no longer includes a question on mode of travel to school, however the Travel Planning Team encourages schools to continue to gather this data twice a year through a simple 'hands-up' survey. This is being used to measure modal shift year on year.

More detailed modal surveys may be undertaken at particular schools in association with particular initiatives; and especially where these have been funded through LSTF.

### **4.4.2 Walking and Cycling**

The Travel Planning Team provide schools with resources to encourage them to participate in National and International walking campaigns. Resources are also available on-line to encourage and assist schools to develop other initiatives particular to their situation and needs.

The Travel Planning Team can also advise on:

- The Tax Efficient Cycle to Work Scheme – support measures are available to encourage staff to cycle to work by providing bikes at beneficial rates through salary sacrifice. This is available for teachers and school staff.
- The Assisted Public Transport Season Ticket Purchase Scheme – Interest free loans and discounted bus and train tickets are available for travel to work for staff. This is available to teachers and school staff.

The Access and Rights of Way Team deliver path improvement schemes on a prioritised basis and include routes to businesses, schools and key service areas to encourage sustainable travel modes. Work is progressing on changing the status of routes to accommodate cyclists where appropriate. This is a growing area of work.

### **4.4.3 Car Sharing**

Car sharing, where appropriate, is encouraged on an individual Travel Plan basis. However, it should not be forgotten that this should be considered a 'least worse' alternative and should wherever possible be combined with initiatives such as 'Park

and Stride' or '5-Minute Walk Zones' so that at least some physical activity is undertaken.

## **4.5 Congestion**

### **4.5.1 Monitoring**

Schools are encouraged to monitor school-gate congestion as part of their Travel Plan.

### **4.5.2 Parking**

Durham County Council has assumed responsibility for enforcement of parking restrictions in the vicinity of schools through a Civil Parking Enforcement process.

## **4.6 Health**

### **4.6.1 Increasing Fitness Levels**

Through the National Healthy Schools programme, we continue to promote more sustainable and active methods of getting to and from school amongst the pupil population of County Durham, e.g. "walking buses" and improving and promoting walking and cycling routes. We will also continue to work with businesses which encourage staff to travel sustainably through Travel Plans.

There are various recreational walking and cycling schemes and events delivered across the County both delivered in-house and by partner organisations which encourage participation in activities which may lead to greater uptake as a mode of travel.

### **4.6.2 Health Partnerships**

We work directly with external partners such as Sustrans and NHS Foundation Trust - Health Improvement Service and through partnership groups such as the Transport and Health Group, as well as across County Council service areas to encourage greater participation in active travel modes with schools and the wider public.

## **4.7 Post 16 Transport Partnership**

The Partnership, including the Council, FE colleges, and sixth forms, explores and implements sustainable transport strategies enabling students to access further education provision, e.g. student discounted travel and assistance with travel for those unable to travel independently.

## **4.8 Home to School Transport**

The home to school transport arrangements are delivered by teams from Sustainable Transport situated with the Regeneration and Economic Development service area. These teams also deliver bus services and the day to day transport requirements of Adults, Wellbeing and Health.

The Unit plans and co-ordinates all the requirements for passenger transport across the Authority and delivers these through a mixture of its own vehicles, use of contractors and a range of tickets bought from bus companies to allow access to the local bus network.

Each commissioning service has a service level agreement setting the expected quality and operational standards. As part of the Council's Conditions of Contract, all drivers and escorts must be authorised following the completion of a disclosure to an enhanced level from the Criminal Records Bureau. This is supported by a thorough transport monitoring regime, which also works with the Taxi licensing section to monitor operator and driver licensing and insurance details of all contractors registered with the County Council.

#### **4.9 New School Design**

The schools will incorporate good quality, secure cycle storage and parents shelters.

#### **4.10 Promoting Use of Public Transport as part of School Travel**

As a means to promote sustainable school travel by public transport, the council employs a strategy of using local buses to provide home to school transport to pupils entitled to "free" transport, where appropriate services exist.

For those pupils who are not entitled to transport under the Home to School Transport Policy, major bus companies operate a range of tickets providing a discount from the normal adult fares, principally aimed at older pupils.

To help encourage these travel arrangements, the County Council has produced a series of travel leaflets for each school and college providing post-16 education, containing details of the services to that site. These are published in PDF format for users to download and print.

All schools and colleges are represented in the Council's Interactive Bus Map and Timetable listing site. This is to be developed further, with a link to an enquiry in the Traveline Journey Planner pre-set for each school.

#### **4.11 Transport Monitoring**

Each commissioning service has a service level agreement setting the expected quality of operational standards. As part of the Council's Conditions of Contract, all drivers and escorts must be authorised following the completion of a disclosure to an enhanced level from the Criminal Records Bureau. This is supported by a thorough transport monitoring regime, which also works with the Taxi licensing section to monitor operator and driver licensing and insurance details of all contractors registered with the County Council.

#### **4.12 Sustainability**

The Council's Sustainability Team undertakes sustainability appraisal which is mandatory for plans, projects and programmes which are prepared for, amongst other areas transport. In 2010 the LTP was subject to Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat regulations Assessment and any revision to these strategic documents should therefore be subject to the same process. Indeed, to ensure Council compliance with Article 1 of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (SEA) it is essential that plans, programmes and projects are screened by the Sustainability Team for potential impacts and to promote sustainable development.

The Sustainability Team can also advise on:

- Impacts of severe weather and building climate resilience into plans, projects and programmes.
- The Climate Change Schools Project. This project involves schools across the County from Year 6/Key Stage 3 upwards in order to embed climate change awareness into all areas of the curriculum. This also encourages schools to review the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from all of their transport.

For more information on these schemes contact the Sustainability and Climate Change team on 03000 265 545.

#### **4.13 Bus Stations**

Durham County Council has assumed responsibility for all of the bus stations with the County.

A variety of measures to ensure the safe and secure operation of all the bus stations are in place, such as the permanent staff employed within Durham Bus Station.

A review is underway in each of the other bus stations to look at initiatives such as permanent staffing and ensuring that the work on CCTV, installed and funded through the County Council all remain in working order as well as maintaining the waiting environment to a high standard to encourage the use of these important gateways to the County's towns and City.

#### **4.14 Park and Ride**

Durham County Council operates three park and ride sites around Durham City. The scheme is designed to reduce congestion and free up space for short term parking within Durham City. The scheme carries thousands of passengers per month. Where feasible, this offers an alternative to parents and pupils, allowing them to park away from the school gate and continue their journey by bus.

#### **4.15 Sharing Knowledge with Other Local Authorities**

Local Authorities within the North East regularly meet in Transport Forums to share knowledge on good practice, legislative matters and operational issues. Durham County Council takes an active part in these forums, which are run and organised by either the Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers or by Local Authorities themselves.

All Forums, including the ATCO North East Education Transport Special Interest Group, represented by officers from the North East and the Northern Regional Local Authority Transport Forum, represented by officers from the North West and North East, cover national, regional and local home to school transport issues and offer advice and guidance on, and a regional response to, home to school transport policies, procedures and legislation, including the duty on Local Authorities to assess travel needs and promote sustainable travel.