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To: EHW Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee
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Subject: Cycle Kent 2010

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary:

Cycling is a low cost form of transport that offers numerous benefits for the people of Kent. Investment in cycle infrastructure is extremely cost effective with a reported benefit to cost ratio of 20:1 compared to 3:1 for other transport schemes. Much has been done to meet the targets outlined in the Local Transport Plan for Kent 2006/11 (LTP). However, continued investment in a safe, high quality cycle network, training and promotion is required to significantly increase the number of people choosing to cycle on a regular basis. *Cycle Kent 2010* brings together a new strategic approach with support from national and local stakeholders to ensure that we achieve a well planned network that is popular, safe and convenient to use.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Cycling offers a unique combination of well demonstrated benefits which are not provided by any other forms of transport. These include improved health, well-being and fitness as well as reductions in pollution and congestion. One of the key targets outlined in the LTP is to increase the number of cycling trips by 38% over a 2003/4 figure.
- 1.2 This report outlines the rationale for investing in and supporting a growth in cycling. It highlights achievements and steps being taken to meet the target to increase cycling trips in Kent. Additionally, Members are invited to attend and support a major event called ***Cycle Kent 2010*** on 18 June at Shorne Wood Country Park which will showcase cycling to key national and local decision makers.

2 Why invest in and support a growth in Cycling?

- 2.1 Cycling is a key component of the Department for Transport's (DfT) Carbon Reduction Strategy (2009). This document states that cycling has enormous growth potential. For example, only 2% of journeys to and from railway stations are currently made by bike and yet 60% of the population lives within a 15 minute cycle ride from a station.

- 2.2 New road capacity costs £11 million/km compared to £70k/km for a comparable section of cycle track. Increasing the number of cycling journeys can reduce congestion and improve air quality; both key targets for the county. In addition, cycling becomes safer as numbers increase e.g. doubling the number of cyclist's results in a reduced risk by approximately a third (Jacobsen, 2003).
- 2.3 The joint DfT/ Department of Health *Active Travel* Strategy (2010) highlights the benefits that regular cycling has for improving health and well being. Regular cycling is associated with reduced risk of ill health and premature mortality (Andersen et al., 2000). In children, cycling to school is associated with greater cardiovascular fitness and decreased indices of ill health, including obesity (Cooper et al, 2006; Ortega et al, 2008). The cost of physical inactivity in England is estimated at £8.2 billion a year, both in terms of treatment and the cost to the wider economy.
- 2.4 A recent report commissioned by Cycling England suggested that returning cycling trips to the levels recorded in 1995 would save approximately £500 million in costs related to ill health, pollution and congestion. At present only 1.5% of journeys are made by bike. If this figure was increased by 50% the total savings are calculated to be £1.3 billion (SQW, 2007).
- 2.5 Sustrans (2008) reported that the number of journeys on the National Cycle Network have increased to 386 million walking and cycling trips, an increase of 9% on the previous year. Membership of the CTC and British Cycling is at an all time high and the number of cycling events in the county has grown significantly in recent years; for all abilities and ages. British Cycling is one of UK Sports most successful teams. In the run up to the 2012 Olympics, investment in the county's cycle infrastructure has the potential to provide a lasting legacy for residents of Kent.

3 Progress and Work in Hand

- 3.1 **District cycling strategies** are vital to the delivery of a well planned and effective local cycle network. They also ensure that the network is compatible with County objectives. In addition, these strategies are vital tools when communicating with developers, local and national agencies and the public. Currently there are adopted and published strategies for Dover, Thanet, and Canterbury. Cycling strategies are under development for Kent Thameside, Sevenoaks, Ashford, Tonbridge & Malling, Shepway and Tunbridge Wells.
- 3.2 Kent has over 416 miles (670km) of cycle network. The first phase of the counties map based **Cycle Track Asset Database** has recently been completed. This is fundamental to the improvement of key links as well as improving our ability to maintain the network to a good standard.
- 3.3 If more people are going to be encouraged to cycle then a convenient, safe and a **well maintained cycle network** is required. To help achieve this, a cycle track maintenance budget has been established and work is under-way to introduce a new regime of inspection and pro-active repairs. This will ensure that issues are resolved quickly and with greater cost efficiency.

- 3.4 **Sustrans Rangers** are volunteers who help to maintain the National Cycle Network (NCN). Kent Highway Services (KHS) have entered into an agreement with Sustrans to support the Rangers project in Kent. As a result, 6 teams of Rangers have been formed to work with KHS to undertake basic sign maintenance, vegetation clearance and fault reporting. Recently a Ranger group cleared over 300 bags of rubbish and other waste from the cycle track that passes through Pegwell Bay Country Park.
- 3.5 **New cycle routes** are being introduced to improve the Kent cycle network. Some of those most recently completed/ under construction include: Oyster Bay Trail between Herne Bay and Reculver, St. Michaels to Tenterden, Princes Park Dartford, Chartham to Canterbury and the A2 Activity Park route in Kent Thameside, which will be designated NCN 177. Feedback on new cycle routes has been excellent and where high quality cycle tracks exist they are well used. For example, an automated cycle counter located on the Tonbridge to Penshurst cycle route recorded 44,000 cycle trips between March and December 2008
- 3.6 Importantly, providing high quality cycle infrastructure benefits all users including pedestrians and disabled people. For example, pedestrians constitute between 51% and 60% of users on the traffic free sections of the NCN (Sustrans 2005). A disabled lady wrote to praise the new off-road cycle route between St. Michaels and Tenterden. The lady explained that, for the first time, she is now able to accompany her son in her wheelchair as he rides to school on his bicycle.
- 3.7 The Sustrans **Connect 2** project demonstrated wide public support for cycling in the UK by winning the vote in the Peoples £50 million lottery bid. It aimed to find practical solutions to the barriers such as dangerous road crossings, that prevent people being able to walk or cycle safely to key facilities. The Kent Connect 2 projects are an extension of the Crab & Winkle Way to Whitstable, Reculver and the Viking Coastal Trail; a link from Dartford town centre to the coast via a bridge over the river Darent; and the Dover Riverside scheme.
- 3.8 The county has some excellent **cycling facilities** including Bedgebury Forest and Fowlmead Country Park. These provide cycling events and facilities for all ages and abilities from family cycle routes through scenic forest through to mountain bike and road racing. Planning permission and a large proportion of funding has now been secured for the A2 Activity Park in Kent Thameside. This project will transform the land left after the re-routing of the A2 into a road cycling circuit, mountain bike circuit, Skate Park and equestrian route. This will provide a safe environment for children to learn about cycling and cycle sport.
- 3.9 Kent Rider **cycle training** is delivered at Kent Schools by the Road Safety Team. Last academic year some 7000 Year 6 children completed the course. This year DfT awarded £112K to pilot *Bikeability*, the National Standard for Cycle Instruction, in Kent. This pilot project is delivering Bikeability in place of Kent Rider to Year 6 Children in Ashford and Canterbury. This scheme is complemented by *Bike it*, a project co-funded through Sustrans, where an

Officer works intensively with target schools to find practical ways to enable more children to cycle. Last year *Bike it* achieved a 7.8% increase in children who cycle to school every day and a 14.6% decrease in children who never cycle to school. This was associated with a 4% decrease in the number of children who were driven to school.

3.10 **Cycling Promotions** are run through a number of publications including the KM Newspaper and “What’s On” magazine and via the Explore Kent website and Explore Kent by Bicycle brochure, in partnership with the Public Rights of Way Team and Sustrans. Data from the Explore Kent website has demonstrated a steady growth in the number of visits to the cycling pages.

4 Cycle Kent 2010

4.1 Whilst much has been achieved to date, it is important that this impetus is maintained and strengthened through further co-ordinated and joint working with our partners. To this end, all County and District Members have been invited to attend *Cycle Kent 2010*. This important event for decision makers offers a unique opportunity to meet and question key figures from Cycling England, Sustrans, Department of Health and Britain's Olympic Team. The aim of the event is to maximise the potential of cycling in our county by bringing key stakeholders together to form a new Kent wide partnership and working group that will produce and drive forward a countywide cycling development plan.

5 Conclusions and Recommendations:

5.1 Cycling offers a unique combination of well documented benefits for the people of Kent. Benefits include improved health, well-being and fitness as well as delivering reductions in pollution and congestion. In addition, investment in cycling is cost effective and has wide public support. Members are asked to note the work undertaken to date to develop and promote cycling initiatives in Kent. In addition, Members are asked to endorse and support the *Cycle Kent 2010* event on 18 June 2010.

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Background Documents:

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