

Active & Sustainable Travel Forum

5.6.2019 – World Environment Day

East Suffolk House, Melton

Event report by Daniel Wareing, Secretary of Greenprint Forum & Environmental Sustainability Officer for East Suffolk Council



To stimulate a conversation around active and sustainable travel, the East Suffolk Greenprint Forum held this event on World Environment Day attended by over 40 delegates including members of the public and representatives of local community groups, statutory bodies and environmental organisations.



Presentations – SCC Transport Strategy, Plug-In Suffolk, and ESC Clean Air Campaign

To help set the scene, the first presentation was given by Sharon Payne, Principal Transport Planner at Suffolk County Council, who gave us an overview of the County Council's Transport Strategy the Local Transport Plan, seeking to promote inclusive growth, health and wellbeing. For example SCC negotiates with a wide range of stakeholders such as bus and rail operators to drive policy, enables opportunities for [road closures for community purposes](#) in residential areas, and has input to the planning application processes as a statutory stakeholder. It provides an advisory service, free of charge, to help advise communities about smarter choices. Suffolk County Council wishes to work with local communities to determine how it can support community ambitions and so would benefit from feedback from the public over their needs and aspirations. Information from SCC on sustainable travel options is available from www.suffolkonboard.com/walking.

Next up, Peter Frost, Environment Officer for SCC – “Electric Pete” – talked about SCC's innovative new Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure initiative called Plug-In Suffolk. A 1st for the UK, the scheme works with local EV company EO Charging from Stowmarket and seeks to develop a county-wide network of universally accessible EV charging points, which do not require the user to be a member of a network or have a special key fob, just a credit or debit card. If anyone knows of a site which could benefit from the scheme they are invited to refer them to get in touch via the [Plug-In Suffolk website](#). Of course, as the National Grid becomes more renewably sourced, the EVs that are powered by it will get greener too.

Then on behalf of East Suffolk Council's Environmental Protection Team, Daniel Wareing gave delegates an overview of some of the work that the team are undertaking in support of [Clean Air Day](#) (20 June 2019) that relates to the school run traffic. The team have been carrying out weekly anti-idling sessions at a different school in East Suffolk each time, to have conversations with parents dropping off or collecting kids about air quality issues, how idling impacts on kids' health, and how we can take individual actions to reduce our contributions to the problem. We are also holding Air Quality Ambassador events on 11 June in Melton and 18 June in Lowestoft to which schools are invited to send pupils to learn about air quality and take a lesson plan back to share with their own schools.

Slides from the presentations by Peter Frost and Daniel Wareing are available [online](#)

Quiet Lanes – Andrew Cassy and Neil Winship

A Quiet Lane is a nationally recognised designation requesting all users to “Expect and Respect” others and are intended to lead to more considerate use of the lanes and contribute to a better quality of life to the local area.

All present were invited to vote on two proposals from Neil Winship and Andrew Cassy relating to Quiet Lanes:

- A proposed change to the Highway Code, which would relate only to designated Quiet Lanes, to improve safety for Non-Motorised Users (NMUs) to reverse the initiative as to when to pass oncoming traffic from motorists to NMUs – effectively requiring motorists to STOP and wait for NMU to either pass or to indicate to motorist that the motorist may pass: **MAJORITY IN FAVOUR**
- Principle of expanding designation of more quiet lanes in Suffolk: **MAJORITY IN FAVOUR**

Andrew Cassy is pursuing potential LEADER grant funding for Quiet Lanes as a Boyton Parish Council activity but would like to extend invitation to other communities to contact Andrew if they have proposals for QLs in their community in case there is an appetite for a joint bid.

Open-Floor Conversation

The main part of the event was our open-floor conversation, chaired by Jane Healey and summed-up by Andrew Cassy at the end.



During the conversation various obstacles to aspirations towards more sustainable and active travel were raised:

- People might want to travel more sustainably but pressures of modern working life prevent them doing so
- Poor public transport routes and insufficient frequency
- Lack of interconnectivity between rail, buses and cycling

- Poor access for disabled users wishing to use public transport
- Lack of safe places for small children to learn to ride a bike
- Lack of safe places to cycle / inconsiderate motorists making roads too scary for cyclists, horse riders, pedestrians
- Poor state of existing cycle / pedestrian paths
- Difficulty of charging EVs at home in residential areas where no off-street parking is available
- Insufficient regard by Planners to aspirations of Town and Parish Councils during planning application process

And lots of ideas were raised too:

- Encourage flexible working
- Encourage more respect between users of different forms of transport
- Cycle racks on buses
- Smaller buses / electric buses
- Use promenades as places to teach small children to ride bikes
- “Walking Buses” for school run
- Tuk-tuks/cycle rickshaws as alternative green taxi services
- Campaign for pedestrians to have priority in shared space schemes, and for cyclists to politely use their bells
- Urge politicians and planners to listen to community aspirations, ensure that planning applications make provision for sustainable travel, and hold them to account with stronger support from Greenprint Forum

The East Suffolk Greenprint Forum will use the feedback arising from this conversation (some key points follow below but for a more complete set of points captured please see Appendix 1) to attempt to identify areas in which can enable progress towards our stated goal of significant progress towards more sustainable and active travel in East Suffolk where low emissions travel dominates by 2030.

P.S.!

- 22 September 2019 is World Car Free Day. Woodbridge Town Council informed the meeting that WTC are applying for road closure for the day, and that they would soon be declaring a Climate Emergency.
- Applications for temporary road closures can be made to SCC Highways via <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/roadworks/apply-to-close-a-road-for-an-event/> but if thinking about applying in relation to World Car Free Day act quickly as applications need to be made 3 months in advance!
- Why not [make a pledge](#) for Clean Air Day 20 June 2019 and tweet it to [@EastSuffolk](#) using #CleanAirDay ?

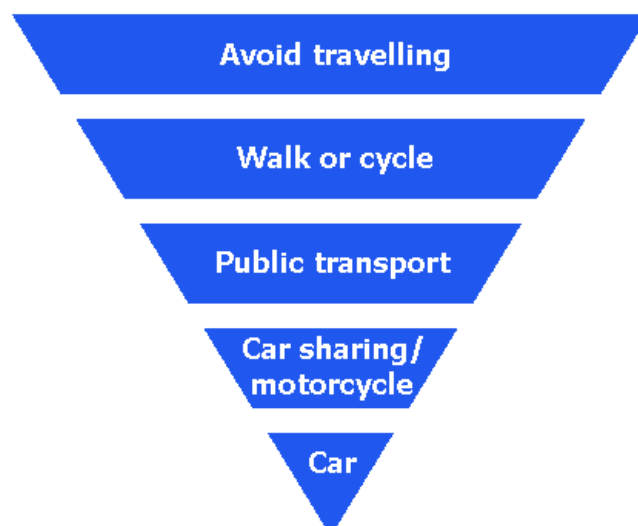
Acknowledgements

With special thanks to all stallholders including Transition Woodbridge, Cycle Felixstowe, Climate Associates Ltd, Quiet Lanes Suffolk, BEE Anglia, Plug-In Suffolk, Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB, Oak Tree Low Carbon Farm, Greenprint Forum and others for engaging with and inspiring attendees during the networking session.



The Greenprint Forum would like to thank all attendees for contributing their time and input to this very interesting and lively evening.

And remember – whenever making travel mode decisions, wherever possible follow the Travel Hierarchy:



Appendix 1 – notes from open-floor conversation

The following is a collation of key observations, points and views expressed by those attending the Travel Forum. [The Secretary of the Greenprint Forum has added their own thoughts/comments in blue.](#)

Walking and cycling

- A walk a day keeps dementia at bay! Active travel encourages physical exercise and are more sociable thus helping promote community wellbeing and cohesion.
- Could key pavements, where width permits, alongside the roads in Woodbridge and Melton, and the road from Melton traffic lights up to Sutton Hoo (which is a key cycling “bottle neck” for access to and from the peninsula) be converted to shared use by pedestrians and cyclists?
- The 3 Communities Link project seeks to connect Benhall and Kelsale with Saxmundham with a multi-purpose community pathway to enable schoolchildren, shoppers and workers to safely get about between the settlements on foot or by bike.
- However, there was concern that designating “shared space” simply shifts the conflict from being between motorists and cyclists to being instead between cyclists and pedestrians with motorists monopolising the roads at the expense of pedestrians. There is rude and inconsiderate behaviour amongst all types of transport network users, not just motorists.
- Investment in new infrastructure to support cycling would be considerable. There should be opportunities at much lower cost to improve existing facilities through signage/surface markings, provision of cycling maps that give an indication of levels of traffic cyclists can expect, that could all help encourage cycling.
- In shared space, the suggestion would be that pedestrian to have priority i.e. cyclist to stop and allow pedestrian to pass unless pedestrian indicates that cyclist may proceed – thus the pedestrian is “King”. Can we learn from Chester’s [“Share with Care”](#) campaign?
- Where can young people learn to cycle in the first place (i.e. the basics of riding a bike as opposed to “roadsense” through cycling proficiency? But safe places to cycle are needed too for people to use once they have learnt. Netherlands had a cycling revolution in 70s, what about UK?
- The promenade in Felixstowe is an example of a relatively recently designated multi-purpose community pathway where cyclists, a local rickshaw operator, pedestrians, dog walkers, joggers, users of mobility scooters etc have been sharing the same space since late 2016 with no known incidents. Could the promenades (e.g. those in

Felixstowe and Lowestoft) become safe places for small children to learn to ride bicycles?

- What about people hard of hearing? Use of bells by cyclists should be compulsory; it is mandatory for new cycles to have bells fitted at point of sale though there is no requirement for a bell to actually be fitted to bikes whilst in use on the roads.
- Many parents drive the kids to school then go to work, this is just a fact due to the pressures that many households are under due to the need for them both to work and/or by the fact that some have autistic children, they are not driving because they are lazy or do not want to consider alternatives but the alternatives currently available simply do not work for them. How can they be enabled to opt for sustainable travel? “Walking buses” for the school run crucially require support and involvement from the school.

Electric vehicles

- Preserve independence whilst enabling revolution away from single occupancy motoring, EVs do preserve independence and they do address pollution (at least at point of use) but do not address the issues of our reliance on personal motor travel, congestion, or how the resources required to manufacture and propel them are obtained.
- In relation to sole traders e.g. electricians plumbers etc – what is the feasibility of EV vans? [ESC is soon due to trial an electric vehicle for their Housing Maintenance Fleet](#)
- Questions raised over the (in)compatibility of EVs with older housing areas, terraces, and where no off-street parking is available – how can the infrastructure of charging points and a capable electrical supply be included? Will charging points be installed on pavements – enabling EV charging at the expense of obstructing pedestrians?

Buses / innovative public transport

- Can the Council establish better and more frequent routes that people would actually benefit from and better links with other public transport network. What about cleaner fuels e.g. could an electric bus run between Sutton Hoo & Melton railway station?
- Include and improve disability access on the buses across the board.
- Smaller public transport buses (i.e. minibuses) for efficiency as opposed to large empty buses going where the need is, localised alongside longer distance services. The sight of large empty buses can in itself cause people to criticise public transport as wasteful.
- Bike racks on front of buses as in US but trains seem to be discouraging carriage of cycles.

- What about tuk-tuks or cycle rickshaws? Felixstowe has an active, independent cycle rickshaw operator, a similar idea was proposed some while back in Woodbridge but opposed at the time by WTC.

Other observations

- Ammonia as alternative fuel – but what is the true environmental cost balance vs lithium batteries for EVs, and comparison with diesel emissions? Belgium converted their entire bus fleet from standard fuel to ammonia fuel in one year during World War II due to a blockade by the Nazis, an example of radical change to a fleet made in a short timescale OK that was under a war footing but SCC has acknowledged that climate change is an emergency too.
- How can we enable flexible working and smart use of technology to reduce need to commute and travel on business?
- Point was made that we have a duty to use our influence as members of the community through the democratic process engaging with consultations and holding statutory bodies to account – but we need to be assured that these processes actually take communities' views into account. The will in the community exists - the experience of WSP in Norfolk is that communities in new builds are open to changes to travel options if they are on offer. WSP also noted that planning regs s106 also mean planning authorities should be ensuring new homes built should aim to get sustainable infrastructure built into planning application eg cycle routes, renewable energy, EV charging points, wildlife corridors, shared spaces, streets closed off from traffic for children to play in them.
- How do we convince/engage with those who are intransigent about the need to change? *If enough people are willing to make changes to their travel choices (and it seems the appetite is out there) would only do so if they could be thus enabled, would our efforts at this particular time be better targeted at supporting those already willing and eager to adopt sustainable options rather than attempting to convert the intransigent who will of course also require enabling in order to change once they see the need? There are small things that most people can probably cope with e.g. cutting out those unnecessary short car journeys – little changes that add up if all get into the habit – but preparing them to ramp up scale and degree of changes once comfortable with the small things.*
- The message very strongly communicated by Parish Councils represented was that they feel that District Council Planners do not adequately listen to or take into account the input from Parishes through the planning consultation process, so they feel that their influence on planning decisions is ineffective. There is an opportunity here for Greenprint to bring planning authority together with PCs to facilitate dialogue.

- ESC will be reviewing its Environmental Policy in due course and there is an ambition for environmental considerations including sustainable travel to be central across all policies for example through more joined up thinking between Council teams to help ensure that sustainable infrastructure is incorporated into new developments. Meanwhile SCC are observing transport strategy initiatives of other areas e.g. Oxfordshire.
- In light of IPCC report, business as usual is not an option, we need to challenge the current hierarchy of road users, challenge the economic priorities that dictate the travel options available to those who must work for example as this is not an issue that can be viewed or solved in isolation. Solutions have to be affordable and practical, whilst sacrifices and hard choices will be faced if we are to achieve sustainable travel as the dominant modes, there is the opportunity to reintroduce fun and sociability especially into active alternatives like walking and cycling.
- The Greenprint Forum needs to become a stronger advocate for sustainable change and be more active in holding decision makers in local and national government to account.

Appendix 2 – organisations represented

Climate Associates Ltd

Coastal Accessible Transport Service (CATS)

Cycle Felixstowe

East Suffolk Council (officers representing Communities, Economic Development & Regeneration, Environmental Services, Planning. Cllr Rachel Smith-Lyte)

East Suffolk Greenprint Forum

East Suffolk Partnership

Green Snape / Snape Good Neighbour Scheme

Hollesley Parish Council

Kelsale-cum-Carlton Parish Council

Kesgrave Town Council

Oak Tree Low Carbon Farm

Quiet Lanes Suffolk

Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB

Suffolk Coastal Friends of the Earth

Suffolk County Council (officers representing Transport Strategy, Plug-In Suffolk. Cllr Graham Newman)

Transition Woodbridge

Waldringfield Parish Council

Wickham Market Parish Council

Woodbridge Town Council

WSP Ltd