

October 19, 2010

Our ref: C 10 008

Cllr Blair (Executive Cllr for Climate Change and Growth) and Sian Reid (Leader of the Council),

Cc: Contacts for each political group, The Chief Executive, and Director of Environment

Cambridge City Council,
The Guildhall, Cambridge



Cambridge Cycling Campaign

P.O. Box 204, Cambridge CB4 3FN
Phone: 01223 690718 fax: 07092 376664
contact@camcycle.org.uk
www.camcycle.org.uk

Dear Councillor,

Cycling: the need to maintain Cycling Officers and cycling funding following cutbacks

With the impending cuts to Local Authorities, we write to stress the importance of maintaining a cycling presence within the transport officer team when you consider changes to your budget. Although we have no knowledge of any planned changes, we write pre-emptively to express our support for the work of the City's Cycling & Walking Officers (job-share) and for cycling-related activities within the Council.

Key points:

- Cycling contributes 20% of Cambridge city journeys and 25% of journeys to work;
- Cycling deserves representation within the officer team in line with these levels;
- Maintaining an officer presence is essential for obtaining new government funding;
- Cycling schemes have a high rate of return and cost less – both important at a time of restricted funding;
- We are pressing the County Council to retain cycling officers also and to ensure that Bikeability cycle training is continued even in the event of severe cutbacks.

Ensuring that cycling retains a fair share of officer resources

As you will be aware, Cambridge has a high rate of cycling, with around a quarter of journeys to work by bicycle within the city, and 20% of journeys generally. Without this level of cycling, it is fair to say that many places would grind to a halt with far worse traffic conditions. With housing growth still taking place, and the need to maintain an efficient network as the prosperity of this resilient region grows, the need to ensure continued investment in cycling remains.

In equity terms, in the event of a slimming down of the officer team in the Climate Change and Growth service area, it would be unacceptable for the city to employ officers covering areas such as planning, sustainability and environment, whilst failing to represent the presence of the form of transport that contributes so many journeys.

Attracting new government funding

The County Council's record on promoting cycling and improving cycling conditions has been facilitated by the contribution to such initiatives locally by the City Council, through its officers and Councillors.

This puts the two authorities collectively in a good position to attract future funding from the recently-announced Sustainable Transport Fund which will effectively replace Cycling England and other initiatives (which we are sad to see being axed). Indeed, as you will be aware, Cambridge's status as a Cycling Demonstration Town, and the millions of pounds of funding that came with this, would not have been possible without this combined record. However, it would clearly not be feasible for the City to claim future leadership or commitment to cycling without at least one full-time officer position dedicated to cycling and walking initiatives (as currently exists).

The key benefits we feel that the Cycling & Walking Officer position brings is as an internal auditor over planning and transport-related schemes run by other colleagues. Monitoring of planning-related matters is particularly important to ensure that cycling provision is taken into account, as is developing new cycling provision to deal with problems on the road/street network.

For all these reasons, we feel it is important that at least one dedicated Cycling & Walking Officer position is maintained within any smaller officer team you may be forced to consider.

High rates of return for cycling schemes generally

In general terms, we would like to remind you of the high rate of return that cycling schemes bring, despite their low cost. Indeed, in a climate of low capital and revenue availability, cycling improvements should be high-priority because they can be achieved within a highly squeezed budget, unlike schemes involving heavier engineering.

The Department for Transport's own model (WebTAG) for economic appraisal of cycling schemes gives a very high rate of return in transport terms: a benefit:cost ratio of 3:1. Work by Sustrans gives even higher benefit ratios, up to 33:1 in some cases. In other words, you can achieve a lot more by putting small amounts of money into cycling, than spending much larger amounts on other transportation projects.

Bikeability

We have written a similar letter to this to the County Council to outline our strong support for the high-quality cycle training scheme, Bikeability. In the event of severe cutbacks, our number one priority for cycling would be the safeguarding of continued funding of this scheme. High quality cycle training for children (but also adults) is essential if we are to see continued levels of cycling in the area, particularly given the high residential turnover. Any cutbacks to this area would be disastrous in terms of road safety. Cycle training is proven to reduce cycle accidents and is the most important place to spend money to reduce traffic collisions.

The scheme's focus on using experienced cyclists to deliver training which deals with real-life road conditions is key to the success of cycle training.

It also contributes considerably to messages about legal and responsible cycling.

For all these reasons, we would therefore welcome any assurances you can give over the retention of cycling posts within the officer team and for any support the City Council can give for Bikeability and other initiatives when talking to counterparts at the County Council.

Yours sincerely,
on behalf of Cambridge Cycling Campaign,

Martin Lucas-Smith
Co-ordinator