

Department for Transport Funding for Cycling in National Parks
Report by Senior Waterways and Recreation Officer

Summary: This report provides members with a summary of the recently published Department for Transport proposals for the funding of cycling improvements in National Parks. Members' comments on the report are welcomed.

Recommendation: That members note the contents of the report..

1 Background

- 1.1 The coalition Government, which has committed to promoting cycling, has recently published proposals for the funding of cycling improvements in National Parks. The Department for Transport (DfT) is inviting Local Authorities, in partnership with National Parks, to bid for a cycle grant to support improvements in cycling infrastructure to enable people to cycle in and around National Parks.
- 1.2 The grant covers the period 2013-2015 and will be distributed through the linking communities programme which is administered by the transport charity Sustrans. The Government feels that Sustrans is best placed to administer the scheme and evaluate applications from Local Authorities as it has unique experience in working with Local Authorities and other partners to deliver small scale walking and cycling links within communities.
- 1.2 The Government's underlying approach to the provision of the cycle grant is informed by three key principles:
 - (a) Putting Local Authorities in the driving seat: it is considered that local people are best placed to identify opportunities, consult locally and build partnerships with communities, cycle Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and local businesses.
 - (b) Working across boundaries, sectors and professions: it is considered that partnership working across authorities NGOs and local businesses will be key to the delivery of the improvements envisaged.
 - (c) Cycling should be an option as part of longer door to door journeys to reach a national park: it is considered that extending the catchment areas of rail stations and bus stops will benefit public transport and help encourage more integrated transport provision thus supporting equality of access.

2 The Scope of the Grant

- 2.1 The DfT is keen to support initiatives which are part of a sustainable strategy intended to support more cycling in rural areas and support future development of the local cycling infrastructure. The grant aims to fund schemes that:
- encourage and enable recreational visits to, from and around National Parks by cycle
 - Encourage and enable people living or working in and around National Parks to travel for day-to-day journeys by cycle.
- 2.2 Schemes will have to demonstrate that they have collaborative support from National Parks, Local Authorities, Local Enterprise Partnership, rural economic, health and tourism partnerships. Further each partnership bid will have to set out how networks will be mapped, build on existing networks and demonstrate that key linkages to public transport hubs and key destinations and communities are being prioritised.
- 2.3 Examples of proposals that may attract funding are:
- cycle hire facilities e.g. at stations and other locations where transport choices are made;
 - improvements to crossings at major roads;
 - rural traffic calming and speed reduction measures on minor roads;
 - cycle tracks and shared roads space schemes;
 - enabling buses to provide cycle carriage; and
 - developments and/or improvements to off- road cycling.

3 Funding and Application Timetable

- 3.1 The DfT will allocate £42m over the period 2013-2015 comprising an urban and a rural element. For the rural element there will be a maximum of three grants to support cycling in National Parks and only Local Authorities acting in partnership with National Parks will be able to bid for these. The main criterion that applicants will have to meet is that the proposed scheme demonstrate that it improves linkages or develops cycling routes and facilities in a National Park or as part of a journey to a National Park. Successful applicants are likely to receive funding of up to £5m over the next two years; however they will need to commit to match funding of at least 30% of costs.
- 3.3 A further constraint on funding is that the contribution is only available for capital. Any revenue funding will have to come from local resources which might include Local Authority grant, European funding, local public health funding, funding from transport operators, civil society, or private sector organisations.
- 3.4 The deadline for applications is 30 April 2013 which will be followed by an assessment of applications with recommendations being made to Ministers during May 2013 and the announcement of successful schemes in May or June 2013.

4 Opportunities for the Broads

- 4.1 Members will be aware that the Broads Integrated Access Strategy seeks to encourage and promote sustainable transport choices in the Broads including cycling. The draft action plan for the strategy includes exploring the feasibility of the Three Rivers Way (3RW) project and particularly the elements of the scheme that link Hoveton with Horning and Horning with Ludham Bridge which has been defined as an “access hub”. The overarching aim of the 3RW proposal is to pursue the creation of a safe shared use route linking Hoveton, Horning, Ludham and Potter Heigham. Recently the Association has carried out a feasibility study for the Horning to Ludham sections of the route and discussions have taken place with Norfolk County Council as Highway authority regarding the potential for support for this route from existing funds.
- 4.2 Officers consider that the 3RW meets the aims of the Integrated Access Strategy as it provides links between public transport facilities (Wroxham Station and various bus stops), cycle hire facilities at Horning and a range of destinations and facilities that visitors to the Broads value. The scheme would also improve safety for travel to school and to local facilities and provide improved opportunities for boaters to access the villages in the area from existing moorings. These benefits meet a number of the assessment criteria for applications for the funding as set out in the guidance documents published by the DfT.
- 4.3 Officers are meeting with colleagues from other Local Authorities and agencies including Norfolk County Council on 25 February to discuss the potential for a bid for funding from the scheme. At that meeting officers propose to suggest that the 3RW route be considered for inclusion in a bid for funding if it proves possible to put together a robust bid within the timescale required. As well as the infrastructure required for the route consideration can be given to linking the 3RW to public transport improvements and new cycle hire facilities if these are viable. An update on the outcome of meeting will be given at the Broads Local Access Forum meeting on 6 March.
- 4.4 It should be noted that competition for funding will be high and the timescale for putting together bids for funding including demonstrating that match funding is available is quite tight. Additionally there are further factors that will be considered by the DfT when applications are determined. These include detailed consideration of the strategic, economic, financial, economic and deliverability cases put forward by scheme applicants.

Background papers: Nil

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Date of report: 19 February 2013

Broads Plan Objectives: TR1, TR2

Appendices: Nil