

MEETING OF THE BERKSHIRE LOCAL TRANSPORT BODY (BLTB) – THURSDAY 10 NOVEMBER 2022

CONTACT OFFICER: Stephen Brown, Chief Operating Officer, Slough Borough Council

Item 6: One Year Evaluation Reports

Purpose of Report

1. At your meeting in July 2022, you approved a less intensive approach towards the impact reports being considered at this meeting to reflect the reduction in reporting requirements from government whilst still demonstrating the value of investment in infrastructure.
2. This report introduces the one-year impact report for the following schemes
 - Scheme 2.09.1 – National Cycle Network 422
 - Scheme 2.13 – Wokingham Thames Valley Park & Ride
 - Scheme 2.28 – Bracknell A3095 Corridor
 - Scheme 2.47 – Bracknell Town ‘The Deck’

Recommendation

3. You are recommended to note the reports from the scheme promoter and the LEP conclusions.

Supporting Information

4. The LEP has a well-established and agreed process for the monitoring and evaluation of BLTB funded local transport schemes, which requires scheme promoters to produce one- and five-year-on post completion monitoring reports for each of their schemes. With the reduction in the level of capital funding overseen by the LEP the monitoring and evaluation process was reviewed and made proportionate and fit for purpose, whilst continuing to demonstrate the value of our investment and to inform future priorities.
5. The format and detail of the reports are now less prescriptive and enable the scheme promoter to tailor the reports to their own needs and make them directly relevant to supporting investment decisions going forwards.
6. The reports submitted by each of the scheme promoters continue to summarise the outcomes of the monitoring and evaluation undertaken following the completion of the schemes. The analysis gives an initial indication whether a scheme has been successful in achieving the related aims and objectives set and agreed at the start of the scheme development. It also seeks to demonstrate that the funding obtained has provided value for money and that any lessons learnt are captured as evidence to inform future decision making. In particular the assessments focus on:
 - Scheme build;
 - Delivered scheme;
 - Costs;
 - Scheme objectives; and
 - Impacts on the economy

National Cycle Network 422

7. Wokingham Borough Council received £4.2m in DfT grant towards the cost of this £7.25m scheme. With contributions coming from local authority funding and S106, Community Infrastructure Levy

and other developers contributions. There were slight overspends in Bracknell and Wokingham, which were covered by increased developer contributions, whilst in West Berkshire there was a slight underspend, so overall the total cost was £7.42m, well within reasonable parameters.

8. The scheme was to enhance the National Cycle Network 422, between Newbury and Windsor, providing a full, coherent east-west link, supporting commuters by linking residential developments and improving journey times, reliability and journey quality for cyclists. This would in turn encourage modal shift and support sustainability, active travel and net zero objectives.
9. As there was already a significant proportion of the infrastructure in place, the funding was used to connect the existing infrastructure and provide a coherent and direct route across local authority boundaries, with infrastructure being delivered in West Berkshire, Reading, Wokingham and Bracknell Forest. During delivery, the eastern end of the route was amended from Windsor to Ascot as there were too many challenges identified in a feasibility study to overcome in creating a safe, direct route through Windsor Great Park.
10. Within West Berkshire 4.4km of on and off-carriageway improvements were delivered along the A4 rather than a continuous route. There were a series of delays and variations due to planning and land negotiation issues. It was also decided to delay implementation, to enable delivery to coincide with resurfacing works which achieved better value for money as well as allowing time to incorporate enhanced design standards.
11. In Reading the scheme consisted of 4 elements providing an enhanced east-west cycle facility, linking to existing cycle routes to the north and south of the borough, directly serving schools and other local facilities/services, alongside forming part of the wider NCN 422 route. There were no major variations from the original plan apart for Wokingham Road local centre where they were limited changes due to not being able to carry out the original design.
12. In Wokingham, the scheme was completed in 4 phases as envisaged. Phase 1 was on Wokingham Road between the B3350 and A3290. Phase 2 delivered a new cycleway on Reading Road between the A3290 and Robin Hood Lane. Phase 3 was split into 2 parts, with one element delayed until the completion of the Winnersh Relief Road so as not to carry out abortive works. Phase 4 was completed in October 2020 and consisted of links to the Eastern side of Wokingham on London Road between Binfield Road and A329(M).
13. Much of the Bracknell section of the NCN422 route was already in existence, so the funding went towards five specific gaps totalling 2.8km in length and serving significant new development sites at Amen Corner
14. Overall the scheme has delivered a full, coherent east-west cycle link between Newbury and Ascot for commuters. Although it did not continue to Windsor for deliverability reasons. It has supported commuters by linking residential developments (existing and proposed) to key employment areas and town centres on the A4/A329 corridor. It has connected existing local and national cycle infrastructure, enhancing cycling connectivity locally and more strategically.
15. Impact data on cycle journey times and reliability is not yet fully available, but there is no doubt that by delivering cycle infrastructure and connecting what was in place that journey quality has improved the situation for cyclists.

16. In terms of volume in West Berkshire both vehicle numbers and cycles flows have dropped but it is likely due to being as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic. In Reading, in general vehicle flows have been steadily decreasing. Cycle flows have increased when the scheme was complete in 2018 and have since decreased but are still above pre-scheme levels. In Wokingham, initially post scheme completion most cycle flows increased briefly, before dropping away and then decreasing more during the pandemic. In Bracknell Forest, vehicle flows have been steadily decreasing. Since the final part of the scheme was completed in mid-2020 which was during the pandemic there is little post scheme data, and what exists shows mixed results in cycle flows as a result of the pandemic and changing behaviours since. The 5-year after report may give better results.
17. As a result of vehicle numbers decreasing there will have been an improvement in air quality as a result of reduced vehicle emissions and less congestion, helping to meet net zero targets and sustainability aspirations. In terms of safety, in general, across the four Berkshire authorities there has been some decreases in accidents and casualties, although there has also been a decrease in traffic flow.
18. Looking at wider growth and economic impact of the scheme the route can be accessed by almost 600,000 residents within a 20-minute cycle, and 250,000 residents within a five-minute cycle. With more than 40,000 new homes due to be delivered across the area the NCN 422 will help to serve many of them and reduce their impact on the highway network by encouraging new residents to switch to cycling for appropriate journeys.
19. The growth of employment in the area is reliant upon transport and communications and the NCN 422 provides improved access to key employment centres and town centres by cycle, having economic benefits in terms of reduced congestion, improved employee productivity and improved health.
20. The one-year on impact report of the National Cycle Network 422 project is attached at Appendix 1.

Wokingham Thames Valley Park & Ride

21. The Thames Valley Park (TVP) Park and Ride scheme provided a new park and ride on the A4 corridor with the overall objectives being to support the forecast housing growth of 13,000 units by 2026 in Wokingham; reduce congestion on the A4 corridor; encourage car drivers to access central Reading using public transport and support other park and rides.
22. The scheme was delivered as envisaged other than a small decrease in provision of parking spaces from 277 to 258 spaces due to design changes. There was also an increase in the number of motorcycle spaces and cycle stands provided. The scheme has been successfully built and opened to the public as a car park in June 2021. There was a six-month delay in starting construction due to a range of design changes and the one-year delay in scheme completion due to these changes combined with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.
23. Unfortunately, a permanent park and ride bus service has not yet been provided given the significant reduction in use of bus services nationally and locally as a result of the Covid pandemic. Therefore, it has not yet been possible to measure the wider impacts of the scheme, so this report has just focused on the delivery elements with a full post 'Post Monitoring and Evaluation Report' being provided once a full bus service has been in operation for one year. This then include a full

assessment of the performance of the scheme and can be incorporated in the 5-year monitoring report.

24. In terms of funding Wokingham Borough Council received £2.9m LEP funding through the Local Growth Fund towards the cost of this £3.6m scheme. The remaining £0.7m coming from a local contribution from the Community Infrastructure Levy. However, the final cost of the scheme was approximately £5.3m. The overspend of £1.7m was determined to be as a result of a number of factors, with the Covid-19 pandemic bringing a range of delays which lead to significant cost increases and programme delays. In addition there are ongoing maintenance costs of £65,000 per annum which are currently not being met as these were to be covered by income from the new bus service.
25. A number of lessons were learned, including project handover, governance and procurement, however, the main factor which led to the scheme delays and increased costs were due to the limitations the pandemic placed upon the project.
26. The one-year on impact report of the Wokingham Thames Valley Park & Ride project is attached at Appendix 2.

Bracknell A3095 Corridor

27. Bracknell Forest Council received £5.52m LEP funding from the Local Growth Fund towards the cost of this £8.02m scheme with a £2.5m local contribution. The scheme was to deliver a series of improvements to the A3095 corridor to address capacity constraints at junctions as part of a wider programme to improve access between the M3 and M4. The main focus of works was at the Golden Retriever Roundabout and Hanworth Roundabout which for years had been characterised by long queues of stationary or slow-moving traffic.
28. The key strategic objectives of the scheme were to reduce north-south journey times; improve journey time reliability for all road users; improve accessibility to Bracknell Town Centre and employment areas; improve connectivity to the Strategic Road Network and improve road safety and reduce the risk of accidents. In assessing the delivery and effectiveness of the scheme, a number of metrics were identified through which the delivery and performance of the scheme could be assessed.
29. Planning for the improvements commenced in 2018 with detailed design and auditing being undertaken throughout 2019. The delivery was modified because of the Covid restrictions, with an overall 11-month construction period from June 2020 to May 2021. This was brought forward from the original programme and the low levels of traffic enabled construction to be carried out at both roundabouts concurrently enabling completion 3 months earlier than planned.
30. In terms of the cost of the scheme, the project came in just over £10.3m, with the overspend covered by Bracknell Forest Council. This overspend was primarily down to the impact of Covid restrictions and a design revision that had been prompted by an alternative layout that reduced the ecological impact of the original design. In addition to this, the budget also increased due to extra greening works and additional measures had to be introduced to comply with social distancing regulations alongside the increased cost of materials during the construction period.
31. An initial evaluation of the scheme in terms of its impact on traffic flows, journey times, reliability and collisions has been carried out. Overall there has been a reduction in traffic flows, which is in

line with that experienced elsewhere during the Covid-19 pandemic. Most notable has been a significant reduction in rat running which has led to a massive improvement in both the efficiency of the Hanworth Roundabout and the quality of life for residents on Ringmead who had previously been affected by the excessive levels of rat running. The redesign of Hanworth Roundabout has also had a positive effect both in terms of increasing throughput through junction and increasing capacity as well as queuing as well as reducing journey times and making them far more reliable.

32. In terms of collisions initial data suggests a reduction in road traffic collision of about a quarter following the implementation of the scheme.
33. The one-year on impact report of the Bracknell A3095 Corridor is attached at Appendix 3.

Bracknell Town 'The Deck'

34. Bracknell Forest Council received £0.955m LEP funding from the Local Growth Fund towards the cost of this scheme, which represented just 5% of the forecast total scheme cost of £19.119m. The actual cost was £1.3m with the developer absorbing the additional portion over and above the grant funding allocation.
35. The funding covered the cost of the demolition of the former Bentalls retail unit, to facilitate the proposed Deck scheme at the Lexicon in Bracknell Town Centre. The demolition works began in January 2021 and were completed in the September 2021
36. The scheme is different to many of the transport related schemes in that that the impact isn't directly realised on its completion. Instead the value lies in the ability to support and bring forward the wider town centre development.
37. The completion of the demolition works has therefore contributed to the continued willingness of the developer to proceed with the next phase of the town centre regeneration. Importantly, the appetite to invest in the Lexicon remains positive, demonstrated by the opening of several new stores. Another demonstration of the continuing commitment to regenerate the town centre as a consequence of the demolition works is the decision by Bracknell Forest Council to progress a scheme to relocate the existing library into the Deck development.
38. Pedestrian footfall data has also been provided that highlights the positive impact of the continuing investment in the Lexicon supported by the demolition works.
39. In terms of wider economic impact when completed the Deck will include the creation of new business units, 3,207 sqm for food and beverage uses and 2,148 sqm for leisure uses. Together these will particularly increase evening footfall, dwell time and spend - while also creating new employment opportunities in an area of high deprivation. It will encourage businesses to locate to the new units creating additional jobs and generating significant economic benefits in the area
40. As a consequence of the Covid Pandemic and wider economic factors the development of the Deck has been delayed and is now due to commence at the end of this year. Completion anticipated in 2024/5. The estimated costs for the construction have inevitably risen to £23.0m and as such the funding for the demolition works now represents 4.% of the overall project costs.
41. The one-year on impact report of the Bracknell Town 'The Deck' project is attached at Appendix 4.