

Minutes of meeting between WSP (Highways Design Engineers), DCC (Devon County Council Highways) and members of BTA (Boniface Trail Association) 11/8/22

The meeting was attended by Lloyd Cole (LC -WSP), Stuart Jarvis (SJ - DCC), Steve Parker (SP - BTA), Roger Cashmore (RC – BTA), Bob Lunnon (BL – BTA) and Nick Dyer (ND – BTA) (Nick had IT problems and was not able to contribute as much as he might have wanted)

LC explained that two routes had been assessed against LTN 1/20, which is the design standard specified by Department for Transport. It was noted that this standard only came into force last year and has superseded LTN 1/12: design standard for Shared Use Routes for Pedestrians and Cyclists. At present any proposed path MUST now comply with LTN 1/20 standards in order to qualify for DfT financial support. BL commented, and LC confirmed, that assessing compliance with LTN 1/20 should be a completely objective process confirming that WSP were generating data reflecting compliance that DCC could then use.

WSP had assessed two routes, ours, and a “Quiet Lanes” route which went from New Bridge via Langford, the Beer Engine, South Lodge (GR852008) and Creedy Bridge (GR847012) and into Crediton along the A3072. They noted an alternative route into Crediton starting at GR850008 – there is a public footpath from this point into Crediton . However BL pointed out that several years ago [before the Boniface Trail Association existed] the landowner of this path had been approached with the idea of converting it to a shared use path and they had resisted.

LC described a particular aspect to be considered when assessing compliance – “availability”. Alongside the A377 the availability is high if there are, for example, a wide verge, good visibility and low hedges. The BTA route has areas of high availability and areas of low availability. Another aspect of the compliance is “directness” – if a route is not direct it won’t qualify for DfT funding.

WSP had measured traffic volumes at a number of points along the quiet lanes route. As an example, near Crediton, at GR850008, there were just under 1,000 vehicles per day, including approximately 20 HGVs. (conveniently under a DfT threshold) , traffic volumes were lower closer to Langford. They also showed illustrative signage which would be deployed if the quiet lanes route was adopted – BL expressed concerns that low speed limits could exacerbate problems of motor vehicles overtaking cyclists.

RC asked SJ how BTA could work together with DCC towards establishing a route for the path. SJ responded that he wasn’t fully up to speed with our negotiations with landowners, commenting that the agreement we had with John Quicke was, by itself, not sufficient to justify a firm commitment to our route. SP explained the current situation with landowners. SP also explained the advantage of our route in that it provided access to settlements on the A377 which wouldn’t be accessible from the quiet lanes route. RC explained that preparatory discussions had also been held with a number of other landowners. RC requested SJ to formally write to the BTA to develop ideas for us working closely with DCC in the future. Stuart agreed to write a letter or send an email. (this has now been received).

SP raised the question of the stretch of road between Cowley Bridge and Newbridge – he had been told by DCC that there was a plan to straighten and widen that road and this process would include provision of a joint use path. Neither SJ nor LC responded to this comment. RC mentioned the

expectation of the Peddlers Pool housing development, with potential extra users for a joint use path, and he also pointed out that the LTN1/20 criteria appeared not to consider different categories of user, recreational disabled. He quoted another member of BTA [not at meeting] who daily commutes on the A377 from Crediton to work in Exeter who stated that she does not use the quiet lanes route for commuting because it is further and would take longer. SJ acknowledged that the DfT guidance was primarily aimed at urban paths.

RC asked about funding, commenting that many funding sources available in the past were not now available. SJ responded that funding would be looked at once costings were released. Costings are currently under review within WSP.

ND commented on a recent piece in the Sunday Times which said that accident rates for Cyclists on rural roads were much higher than for cyclists in urban roads. ND also asked if the slides from the presentation could be made available, but this was refused.

At the end of the meeting it was reiterated that the report was not finished, costings were undergoing review at WSP, but it should be released to DCC in weeks.