

Report to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport
Report submitted by: Executive Director for Environment
Date: 8 November 2013

Part I

Electoral Divisions affected:
Ribble Valley South West;
South Ribble Rural East;

Proposed Cycle Safety Scheme M6 Junction 31 to BAe Samlesbury
(Appendix 'A' refers)

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Executive Summary

It is proposed to implement a cycle safety scheme between M6 Junction 31 and BAe Samlesbury. The scheme would be largely funded by a £200,000 grant from the Department for Transport (DfT) Cycle Safety fund.

This is deemed to be a Key Decision and the provisions of Standing Order No 26 have been complied with.

Recommendation

That the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport gives approval for,

- i. implementation of the proposal, on the route as shown on the attached plan at Appendix 'A',
- ii. removal of the footway and construction of a cycle track of 3m width, on the Northern side of the A59 from the M6 junction 31 to the junction with Potters Lane, Samlesbury on the section marked Area 1 on Appendix 'A',

- iii. signing of the route as a cycle track and a route available on cycle as considered appropriate by the Executive Director for Environment,
- iv. the section of Bridleways 22 and 23 Samlesbury marked Area 2 on Appendix 'A' to be surfaced,
- v. works considered appropriate by the Executive Director for Environment on the section of Potters Lane recorded as unclassified road U12301 marked blue on Appendix 'A', and
- vi. minor improvements to be carried out on the cycle track on the A59 on the section marked Area 3 on Appendix 'A'.

Background and Advice

Funding has been granted from the DfT to implement a scheme that will help to improve cycle safety between M6 junction 31 and BAe Samlesbury. Acceptance of the grant was agreed by the Cabinet Member for Highway and Transport on 14th August 2013.

The scheme would benefit cyclists commuting to BAe as well as recreational cyclists from the local community. Other highway users and those using the route under private rights are not considered to be adversely affected. The scheme is made up of three elements:

A) Removal of the footway on the north side of the A59 dual carriageway and construction at a width of 3 metres of a cycle track between the M6 junction 31 and Potters Lane, Samlesbury. This will link to an existing cycle track on the North side of the M6 junction which in turn links to the Preston Guild Wheel to provide routes into the centre of Preston and to the north of the City.

B) Signing an alternative cycle route via minor roads and linking bridleways from Potters Lane to A59/Woods Brow junction opposite BAe. Around 500 metres of bridleway will be surfaced. The rest of the bridleways are already tarmacked. The bridleways provide access to farms and houses.

C) Minor improvements to the existing cycle tracks on the A59 between Woods Brow and the main entrance to BAe.

Despite low cycle flows, there have been 3 injury accidents to cyclists at M6 Junction 31 in last 2 years, making it a very high risk location for cyclists. There have been a further 3 injury accidents to cyclists on the A59 between the M6 and BAe including a fatal accident at the site entrance. There have been a large number of complaints from cycle user groups about M6 junction 31 over the years.

The M6 junction and A59 are felt to be a barrier to people cycling to BAe. Current cycling levels at the site are low. At present around 78 employees (1.5% of a 3,500

workforce) cycle to the site on a regular basis of which 52 might use the route. At the University of Lancaster 13% of staff cycle to work. Employment at the site is likely to increase with the development of the Enterprise Zone to around 10,000 increasing the need to improve cycle routes to site.

At present Westbound cyclists approaching the M6 junction on the A59 have a choice of crossing the dual carriageway to join the cycle track on the north side of the junction which is difficult due to the volume and speed of traffic, or attempting to negotiate the junction which is challenging on a bicycle due to the number of lanes and high speeds presented. The proposed scheme avoids the need for cyclists coming from BAe to cross the dual carriageway or negotiate the roundabout.

As well as people cycling to BAe and the proposed Enterprise Zone the route is also likely to be used for leisure purposes and by people cycling into Preston from villages to the East.

The minor highways and bridleways to the north of the A59 already exist as part of the highway network and already carry rights for cyclists to use them.

Consultations

A letter drop was delivered to the affected properties along the route and a public meeting was arranged by Balderstone and Samlesbury Parish Councils.

Replies were received as follows:

Both Balderstone and Samlesbury Parish Councils have objected to the proposals.

A local County Councillor has indicated that he will not support the proposals unless the County Council takes responsibility for future maintenance of the bridleway.

A local County Councillor supports safe routes for cyclists in general. He notes that traffic flows on the minor roads should be low. He is keen that the views of landowners and farmers are heard and noted. He also raised the points set out below:

- The proposed route does not benefit cyclists going to the site from Mellor, Ribble Valley and Blackburn. There is a need to consider cyclists from these directions as well.
- Though accepting that the route offers an attractive leisure cycle route, questions whether cyclists going to BAe would use it.
- Raises the need to consider horses on the section of bridleway which is to be tarmacked.
- Points out that the draft master plan for the Enterprise Zone which is due to go out for consultation shows the proposed cycle route alongside the A59 from the A677 junction to BAe rather than using the bridleway.

In response, it is accepted that there is a need to improve cycle routes into the site from Ribble Valley and Blackburn. There is back entrance into the site from Mellor that pedestrians and cyclists could use. The route has been put forward by members of BAe cycle user group and it is known that some cyclists going to BAe already use the route. The section of the bridleway which is to be tarmacked includes a hill.

Horses can find tarmac slippery on hills. On the hill a surface dressing to improve grip for horses would be used.

BAe cycle user group reiterated their support for the scheme and a letter of support was received from the CTC.

Four responses were received from residents local to the route who offered their full support to the proposals.

The proposed conversion of the footway on the A59 between the M6 junction and Potter Lane appears to be relatively uncontroversial with comments back from this section being neutral.

Most of the comments were against the proposal to sign a cycle route to BAe along the minor roads and bridleway. The main reasons given were concerns about safety on the minor roads and possible conflict between cyclists and agricultural vehicles, as well as other traffic along the proposed route. Objectors felt that instead of signing cyclists via minor roads and the bridleway the proposed cycle track should extend all the way along the A59 to BAe.

Other concerns raised included increased likelihood of trespassing onto private land.

In addition telephone calls were received from two people living elsewhere who walk along the bridleway on a regular basis. They raised concerns about possible conflict with cyclists if more cyclists were using the route

Executive Director of Environment has considered the responses and makes the following comments:

It is considered that the proposed route uses lightly trafficked minor roads and bridleways and offers a safer alternative than the heavily trafficked A59. There have been no injury accidents to vehicles or cyclists on the minor roads used by the proposed route in the last five years.

Traffic flows on the proposed route are very low. On Potters Lane, 393 vehicles were recorded at the junction with the A59 in a 12 hour period in 2010. Part of this flow will be traffic going to the school or an agricultural business located by the A59 Potter Lane junction. On Woods Brow by the A59, 106 vehicles were recorded between 7 and 10am and a further 87 vehicles between 3pm and 6pm. On the middle section of the route, traffic flows will be far lower as there are a limited number of properties served by the route. There is no through traffic as there is a locked gate on the bridleway with a gap large enough for horses, walkers and cyclists.

There is sufficient room for a vehicle to pass a cyclist on Woods Brow and Potter Lane along the majority of the carriageway, though there is a pinch point on Woods Brow by the bridge over Bezza Brook. On Bezza Lane and the corresponding bridleway, which is little more than single track, there are informal passing places available and ample verge widths provided for a cyclist and a vehicle to pass at most points.

Cyclists are already allowed to use the route as they are legally allowed to use bridleways, with the rest of the route being on public roads. There is already use of the route by cyclists. There is evidence that this has increased as cyclists have become more aware of the route.

Consideration would be given to signing hazards on the route (e.g. slow markings at narrowings or before bends) and erection of signs to warn cyclists that farm traffic might be using the bridleway to further reduce the potential dangers. However on a rural route there is also a need to keep signing to a minimum. Clear signing will reduce the chance of a cyclist trespassing into a farm or private drive by mistake. There are at least two points on the route where it is potentially possible to take the wrong turn.

As cyclists from BAe will make up a large proportion of users on the route, it should be possible to work with BAe to send out safety messages to their staff to give consideration to farm vehicles and other users when cycling along the route if there is a problem.

However if the route is successful it is likely that cyclists will make up the majority of users on the route which will in effect change the nature of the route for other road users.

The safety of the other users has been considered. The new cycle track will be wide enough for shared use and it is considered that on the other sections safe shared use by those on foot, on horseback, in vehicles and on cycles is not unreasonably adversely affected even if cycle use increases.

Alternatives Considered

1) Extending the cycle track along the A59 to the BAe entrance. This would cost around £500,000. Arguably the proposed route offers better value for money as it is more likely to be used by users other than just employees of BAe. It is also a more attractive route than a cycle path along the busy A59. However it is possible that the highway works for Phase 2 of the Enterprise Zone may include improvements for cycle facilities on the A59 though plans are not firm at present and it is anticipated that this would not be before 2020. In any case the proposed route would still provide an attractive cycle route to BAe and the Ribble Valley.

2) Extending the cycle track on the A59 to A677 junction where the dual carriageway section ends. There are narrow cycle lanes of a sub standard width on the A59 between A677 and BAe. This option would also benefit cyclists continuing on the A677 to Blackburn. It would cost £400,000. Sustrans who manage the grant on behalf of the DfT indicated that it does not think this scheme could be completed in the time scale of the grant and so would withdraw the grant.

3) Only proceeding with the conversion of the footway to a cycle track between M6 and Potters Lane and not signing the proposed route via minor roads and bridleways to BAe. Sustrans has indicated that it would withdraw the grant as the scheme would not achieve its objective of providing a safer cycle route to BAe.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

If the proposed cycle route is not provided, the majority of cyclists will continue to use the high speed A59. As stated this route has seen a number of injury accidents over the past few years. These rates are only likely to increase with the increased employment generated by the new Enterprise Zone. Furthermore, the A59 route will discourage people taking up cycling as a mode of travel. The possible increased use of the route by cyclists is not thought to have unreasonable adverse effects on other users.

Legal

a) The section changing from a footway to a cycle track:

The legal procedure to convert a footway to a cycle track is under Section 66 of the Highways Act 1980 to remove the footway and under Section 65 to construct a cycle track, although this may involve little physical work.

Under Section 66 of the Highways Act, it is a duty to provide proper and sufficient footways, for use on foot alongside the made-up carriageways where it is considered necessary, or desirable, for the safety or accommodation of pedestrians.

Such footways can be removed under the Highways Act provision and this may be appropriate where a discrete footway is no longer necessary and a cycle track will provide a safer shared use area.

b) The section on existing unclassified roads and bridleways:

This is already existing highway network available for the public on cycles, on foot and on horseback and is maintainable at public expense, maintained as bridleway standard on the bridleway sections. Documentary evidence indicates that this network of lanes was in existence over 150 years ago. There are considered to be no significant adverse effects for all users of these sections should more cyclists use these routes and no specific legal implications of this proposal.

Financial

The proposed scheme would be funded by a grant from the DfT Cycle Safety Fund which was set up in response to concerns about cycle safety. Nationally 78 schemes are receiving £20 million of available funding. The grants are being administered by Sustrans with all funding having to be claimed by the end of the financial year.

The scheme is estimated to cost £250,000. The grant funding is for £200,000, with the remaining £50,000 being found from the 2013/14 Local Transport Plan allocation for the Central Lancashire Master plan.

Maintenance

Part of the route uses bridleways. Whilst a Highway Authority is responsible for the surface of these particular bridleways and cyclists can use them, there is no requirement for the Highway Authority to facilitate the use of the bridleways for cyclists. However as a promoted cycle route it is anticipated this route may be given higher maintenance priority than at present.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
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Nil.

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A.