



Smart Network, Smarter Choices Update

Issue 3, October 2013

Overview

Smart Network, Smarter Choices is a multi-million pound programme designed to help tackle congestion, reduce carbon emissions and kick start the regional economy. The project started in 2012 and involves implementing a wide range of sustainable travel (cycling, walking and public transport) schemes along ten key corridors in the West Midlands not only to benefit congestion, carbon emissions and the economy, but also to change mindsets and provide a more comprehensive approach to movement across the 10 corridors. Each corridor will see a variety of measures and/or improvements to encourage people who live, work and visit the area to travel sustainably.



Dan Watson from BikeRight! holding a Dr Bike session at Cradley Heath Interchange

Black Country

Black Country residents saddle up for free cycle training

More than 170 cyclists across the Black Country have taken advantage of a free scheme to help sharpen their skills on two wheels.

Centro, the region's transport authority, have teamed up with BikeRight to provide free cycle training and bicycle maintenance courses as part of its Smart Network, Smarter Choices project which aims to boost the economy, cut carbon and connect residents to jobs.

Following British success in the Tour de France and Olympic Games, 170 people have signed up for the project, which gives adults the chance to take courses from basic to advanced. Each course is tailored to suit individuals, from beginners to advanced cyclists. Those taking part can also pick up free advice on route planning and take part in led rides.

Clr Judith Rowley, Centro's lead member for fair, accessible and sustainable transport, said: "If it's been a while since you last rode a bike or you are considering taking up cycling for the first time it can be confusing knowing the best way to go about it.

"By taking advantage of this free support you can improve your confidence in riding on the roads, find out about cycle routes in your area and learn the best ways to keep yourself safe on two wheels."

Each session is delivered by qualified expert instructors from BikeRight! and lasts for up to two hours. The training is provided at various locations including East Park, Wolverhampton every Tuesday evening between 5pm and 7pm. There are also free maintenance courses available to help people learn the best ways to fine tune the bicycles and help deal with everyday wear and tear. Training and maintenance is available for residents in Walsall, Wolverhampton, Sandwell and Dudley and will run until March 2015. To book, visit: www.bikeright.co.uk/westmidlands

Programme Update

- In Dudley, the initial phases of both Quarry Bank High Street works and pedestrian/cycle network routes commenced onsite in August, expected to complete in October. Main works on the A459/Kent Street/Burton Road/Eve Lane/Jews Lane junction is complete, minor works including bus priority technology due to be completed in December. Design work is complete for the Castle Hill development site pedestrian/cycle link and contractor appointed.

- In Sandwell, five junction improvement schemes have been completed which will improve journey times for local bus users. Further bus priority work to be installed on the following junctions in mid November: Walsall Road/Beaconview, Walsall Road/Sandy Lane, Oldbury Road, Throne Road, Titford Lane and High Street/Ross/Powke Lane.
- In Walsall, work commenced on the Wednesbury Road/Corporation Street junction at the end of July and civils works are complete. MOVA still needs to be implemented on this junction
- In Wolverhampton, detailed design is nearing completion on both the Green and Black cycle routes. Detailed design is also complete, costs finalised and contractor appointed for the Blue off road cycle route. The A459/Parkfields Road junction has been approved and the detailed design is nearing completion.



Cllr Kath Hartley, Vice Chair of ITA, and Alison Pickett, Sustainable Travel Manager, launch the PTP project

Birmingham and Solihull

Hundreds of South Birmingham and Solihull families benefitting from green scheme

Hundreds of families living along two busy routes in South Birmingham and Solihull are benefitting from expert personalised travel advice as part of the personalised travel planning project which provides free tailored travel plans to help those wanting to make the switch to public transport, car-sharing, walking or cycling. Hundreds of homes along the busy A41 Warwick Road and A45 Coventry Road are being visited, specifically focussed on the Tyseley, Acocks Green, Sheldon and Olton areas.

Cllr Judith Rowley, Centro's lead member for green and accessible transport, said: "Having expert support can help people make informed decisions on how they travel to work, to see friends or to do their shopping.

"We looked for routes in the region with the most congestion and chose those where we felt residents would benefit from some expert advice on some of the travel options available to them.

"The West Midlands loses more than £2.3 billion each year through traffic congestion so if we can keep people moving it will not only cut congestion but help support our economy at as well."

In addition to tailored travel plans, the advisers provide support including free public transport taster tickets, adult cycle training and local community guides.

Cllr Tahir Ali, Birmingham City Council's cabinet member for development jobs and skills, said: "Transport plays a vital role in connecting residents to jobs, education and training and it is important that we make sure people know exactly which options are available to them.

Programme Update

- In Birmingham, design and development work is progressing on all packages of their programme. Construction works on section 1 (Ring Road to Selly Oak) of package 1 of the A38 Bristol Road corridor underway with the expected completion by end of 2013. Public consultation feedback and design has been completed and reviewed for a number of the other Packages ready for full business case to be prepared.

- Construction of Phase 3 of the North Solihull Strategic Cycle Network is underway and is likely to still be on target for end of November 2013 completion. Construction of Phase 4 is complete. Phase 5 (including Craig Croft Village) and the Chester Road Cycle Links are currently in the detailed design stage ready for works to commence in October 2013.



Cyclists waiting on the start line to have a go at cycling the Ring Road to celebrate Godiva's return

Coventry

Over a thousand turn out on bike and on foot to welcome Godiva home

On Saturday 10 August over a thousand cyclists and walkers took to Coventry's Ring Road to welcome the Godiva cyclopaedia back to Coventry. Cyclists spent the morning enjoying a car free Ring Road before joining walkers to become part of Godiva's Cavalcade, an amazing sight as it travelled the Ring Road.

BikeRight! were on hand at the start line to ensure peoples' bikes were in good shape by offering free Dr Bike checks. We also had a large stand in Broadgate awaiting the arrival of the cavalcade promoting the cycle offer and the wider Cycle Coventry project and engaged with over 300 people.

Godiva was welcomed back to the City by the Lord Mayor of Coventry Cllr Gary Crookes and helped Coventry City Council and Cycle Coventry launch Coventry on the Move aimed at encouraging people to get active! Cyclists, walkers and visitors to the City were entertained throughout the day by dancers, drummers, and a choir along with other street theatre companies.

Programme Update

- Route 3 (Phase 1) of Sowe Valley footpath was completed at the end of July 2013, and Phase 2 started on 5th August 2013, this is programmed to run through to end of October 2013. Route 1 Stoke Heath Park and Cash's Park - path are complete and the next phase of route 1 under design is Radford recreation ground, and the road links to it across the railway – contractors are due on site in November. Work on Route 2 Canal path is scheduled to take place in February 2014.
- Free Adult Cycle Training has been taking place at Moat House Leisure and Neighbourhood Centre and has now started at Xcel Leisure Centre too. Councillor Lancaster (portfolio holder for transport/public services at CCC) attended on 14 September which brings the total participants to 120 people so far. In addition more than 50 people have already taken part in cycle maintenance courses and more public and workplace courses are planned.

TRAVELWISE[®]

Smarter Choices

European transport chiefs tell conference that green travel can boost economy

Centro hosted the TravelWise/INVOLVE conference at Birmingham's Colmore Gate to explore cycling models from the Netherlands, how investment in transport is supporting European economies and how travel boosted business during the London 2012 Olympic Games.

Speakers from Italy also showcased plans to create an extensive new network of cycle routes in Reggio Emilia, a city in the north of the country.

Business representatives and travel experts from across the region attended the conference to learn how green travel options such as the bus, train, tram, walking and cycling can help their employees travel to and from work.

The conference took place during the week long international Grow with Public Transport campaign which aims to show how greener travel choices can support the economy, the environment and people's quality of life.

Conrad Jones, Centro's head of sustainability, and who chaired the conference said: "This was a real opportunity for us to look at how transport is used to support businesses across the continent."

"We have already started work on improving cycling infrastructure in the West Midlands and working with European counterparts gives us the opportunity to look at how we can build on that work in the future.

The project was co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund and made possible by the INTERREG IV C Programme.

Young people take part in event to shape future of public transport

Nearly 50 young people attended a special event on 15 October to help shape the future of public transport across the West Midlands.

Centro held the Youth Engagement Event at Birmingham's Aston University for students from 14 of the region's schools and colleges, to find out what the commuters of tomorrow want from their transport network. Forty nine young people aged 11-18 took part in the event where Centro were told the group's vision for how transport will link into people's lifestyles in 2030.

Those who attended the day have now been invited to apply to form part of a 20 strong team of young advisers whose ideas and experiences will help shape Centro's work in the future.

CLr Judith Rowley, Centro's lead member for fair, accessible and sustainable transport, said: "Today was all about us having the chance to sit down and talk to some of the people who will form the next generation of commuters in our region.

"Their ideas can help make sure the work we are doing at Centro moves towards giving the public a transport network which meets the demands of a modern lifestyle.

Each attendee took part in three workshops aimed at getting their feedback on the transport network and views on how life might look in the future. Technology like Centro's Smartphone applications was discussed, with many of the young people offering points for development and improvement. Centro also highlighted its work with schools and colleges to help make travel easier for teachers and students as part of its Smart Network, Smarter Choices project.

Nine schools and colleges from across the region were also handed awards for their work towards helping their pupils and staff take greener forms of travel.

A busy summer of events

The summer period saw a large amount of promotional activity for the Smart Network, Smarter Choices programme.

Starting in July was the hugely successful Smarter Travel Marquee at the Godiva Festival. Over the course of a very hot weekend we welcomed over 3,000 people into



Cllr Judith Rowley, Centro's lead member for fair, accessible and sustainable transport with Lyndon School, Solihull pupils who won the Smarter Choices School of the Year Award 2013.



The Godiva puppet returns to Broadgate, Coventry

the Smarter Travel marquee where they could find out about WorkWise, Letz Go Green, cycling in Coventry and also meet the Transportables! The team then moved on to the Wolverhampton Show the following weekend where BikeRight were in attendance offering a range of cycling activities. At the end of the month the team started to prepare for the Personalised Travel Planning project along the A45 Coventry Road and the A41 Warwick Road with a series of promotional events beginning in Sheldon Country Park.

The first weekend in August saw the return of the Godiva cyclopaedia to Coventry with a large celebratory festival which included the closure of the ring road for a cavalcade of cyclists to use for the day. The team were located in Broadgate at the heart of the festival with information about the Cycle Coventry project. At the end of August the team had a presence at the Sandwell Show alongside a cycle roadshow offering free bike checks.

September started with the Lions Family Cycling Fun Day in Cannon Hill Park where we had a cycle-powered smoothie maker which attracted a sizable crowd. This was soon followed by the return of SkyRide to Birmingham and the team was out in force at Cannon Hill Park and Millennium Point offering information, maps and incentives to the participants, as well as having a cycle-powered music maker that people enjoyed. Late September saw the launch of two competitions to help celebrate European Urban Mobility Week. One competition focussed on businesses and their employees and the other competition had more of a fashion-related feel to it, aimed at breaking down some of the style stereotypes regarding public transport. To round off the summer, the team attended Fun in the Park at Tudor Grange in Solihull promoting the cycling offer. Additionally, throughout late September the Education and Marketing teams undertook a large amount of events with the arrival of the freshers at the region's universities and colleges.

A partnership between technical firm AECOM and cycling development business BikeRight! has been selected to provide a package of measures across the West Midlands including free adult cycle training, route planning, led rides and bike repairs. The initiatives hope to help the region reach challenging environmental targets, which aim to cut carbon by around 10,000 tonnes by 2015 and boost cycling by two million trips each year.

Smarter Choices Update

- 50 draft education travel plans (target of 50 draft travel plans) have been developed and 23 final travel plans (target of 22) have been produced. This has slightly exceeded the overall target. Baseline surveys are currently progressing with 38 out of the 50 schools being either base lined or close to being base lined. The Travel Support Package (originally referred as transition training) is actively being promoted with 876 referrals delivered out of a total target of reaching out to 2430 pupils by March 2015. This exceeds our profiled target of 400 pupils till the end of September 2013.
- To date, initial contact has been made with 346 employers, and 114 inception meetings have been held. At the end of September 87 employers have signed up to participate in travel planning. At the end of September, 40 travel plans had been delivered and signed off. Of the travel plans signed off, 27 have generated referrals to both the walking and cycling teams.
- In the Black Country, 307 people have benefitted from cycle training. In Birmingham and Solihull, the figure is 512 and in Coventry (north and south combined) 309 people have participated. Referrals have been coming through for walking support for the A34, A4123, A41 North, A41 South, A38/A441 and number 4 bus route corridors. There have been five people trained as walk leaders too. Work continues to promote the walking offer with a particular focus on employers and educational sites implementing Travel Plans.

- The Safer Travel Police training has commenced, and these officers will complete training end of November. They will be ready to be 'sworn in' in January and commence beat work. Numerous impact type events have been carried out with some cycle surgeries – this has allowed the team to engage with cyclists about cycle safety and security and also with the travelling public about personal safety. The 3 LSTF Police Constables have been carrying out patrols on the 3 corridors; special focus has been on Birmingham South and Walsall Bus Station and Walsall Road, which have been identified as priority locations through our feedback from customer/stakeholder panels
- At the end of September (reporting for August) Workwise had issued a total of 437 passes against a target of 179 for the month. This shows excellent progress, and for the first month the cumulative outputs exceed the targets with 2,471 unemployed people supported into new jobs against a target of 2,294. August was the third month of the cycling offer. To date 15 cycle referrals have been processed (against a cumulative target of 42), with a good distribution across the districts suggesting that the message is getting out.

More information

If you require any further information regarding this update or relating to any other aspect of the Smart Network, Smarter Choices programme, please contact:

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