

Active Travel Fund Tranche 2 A465 Walking & Cycling links (Draft)

Herefordshire Council

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1.0 Introduction and Background

The A465 Aylestone Hill walking and cycling scheme proposes to upgrade the active travel links between the City Centre, Hereford's railway station, new University student accommodation and future transport interchange with the colleges and ultimately the Park & Share scheme along Hereford's north eastern radial route. It provides improvements along this key route into the city centre from the north east quadrant of the city and seeks to address difficulties experienced by pedestrians and cyclists along and across the busy radial route.

Although Aylestone Hill already has an uphill mandatory on-road cycle lane, there is currently no segregation from the traffic. An existing pelican crossing midway up the hill offers a link for pedestrians between the adjacent park and the footway on the eastern side of the road. There is currently an uphill cycle bypass lane at the crossing which is occasionally overgrown. At the top of the hill is a pair of mini roundabouts with a two stage zebra crossing over the short stretch of road in between them. These mini-roundabouts connect Venns Lane to the west with Folly Lane to the east and both of them with the A465.

Folly Lane is the location of our tertiary education colleges and there is a strong active travel demand between here and the railway and bus stations. With the transport interchange planned for the railway station forecourt and the new student accommodation coming on-stream we are expecting future active travel demand to rise along this route.

Continuing beyond the two mini roundabouts the route continues on the A465 downhill to the existing park and choose site at Aylestone Park. The return journey is also assisted by a mandatory uphill cycle route to improve the attractiveness of the site. The Park & Choose site includes vehicle parking and cycle storage lockers for commuters to switch from car journeys to active travel modes. More recently the Beryl bike hire bays have been extended to serve this site.

The scheme proposes upgrading existing on road cycle facilities and upgrades to pedestrian infrastructure.

The improved route into the city combined with the recent improvements to the [Beryl Bikes](#) hire provision at the park and choose site, and the potential future introduction of electric share bikes, provides a viable alternative for cars entering the city on this route and will encourage the reduction of traffic on this corridor.

This corridor was one of the twelve active travel corridors identified in the Hereford Transport Package, and also prioritised as one of the highest scoring routes within the council's remit with capacity for shifting to active travel modes using the Department for Transport's Rapid Propensity to Travel tool (RPCT).

The design will be aligned with national policy on cycling infrastructure design, [LTN1/20](#) and its accompanying [Gear Change](#) policy document, ensuring a high-quality, safe cycle scheme that encourages active travel modes as being the travel modes of choice. Consultation will help inform improvements for pedestrians, cyclists and other traffic.

Funding for the scheme is from the government's Active Travel Fund supporting local transport authorities with producing cycling and walking facilities, following Herefordshire Council's bid in July 2020.

This report has been prepared to detail the communication strategy for the updated scheme reflecting its importance and impact and will be updated as the project develops.

1.1 Key objectives

The key objectives of this communication strategy are to lay out how we will engage with key stakeholders and users of the A465 Walking & Cycling links to support development and delivery of the scheme. This will be achieved through:

- Defining the communications approach and process
- Effective engagement with affected key stakeholders to contribute to and inform design
- Effective communication with the public and wider stakeholders
- Identify opportunities for integration with wider strategic messaging

1.2 Key outcomes

Delivering the objectives should result in the following outcomes:

- Local understanding of reasons and benefits of the work (clear and consistent messaging)
- Local community is able to input into the development of the scheme
- Users of the street are clear on the scope of the scheme and during delivery where works are taking place and arrangements for access to premises
- Benefits of the scheme are maximised through integration with wider strategic messaging on active travel and transport choices
- Consistent proactive and reactive messaging during scheme development and delivery

1.3 Key Messages

The following key messages will be used consistently throughout all communications:

The A465 Walking and Cycling links will:

- Improve the existing cycle infrastructure up the city side of Aylestone Hill to the latest national guidance published in July 2020
- Improve the facilities for pedestrians, in particular crossing arrangements
- Address the challenges that currently discourage people from walking and cycling in the vicinity
- Encourage active travel in Hereford as the natural choice for journeys less than 2 km and for active travel journeys to be cost effective, convenient, safe and healthy.
- Support a reduction in carbon and other transport related emissions in the county
- Promote healthy lifestyles by continuing to deliver behavioural change projects and infrastructure that encourage active travel and physical activity
- Provide a good quality, convenient and safe transport network that prioritises walking and cycling
- Be developed through engagement with local and key stakeholders
- Be developed and delivered during 2021 and 2022.
- Be funded by the government's Active Travel Fund which is aimed at supporting local transport authorities with producing cycling and walking facilities, following Herefordshire Council's bid in July 2020.

2.0 Stakeholder Assessment

The successful delivery of the A465 walking and cycling links will be reliant on ensuring that all relevant stakeholders are engaged with development of plans and, at the time of delivery, are informed of the works and how any impact of the works are to be mitigated.

The communication requirements will vary for different stakeholder groups, therefore in the assessment of the stakeholders the first stage is to determine this high level grouping.

2.1 Local colleges and schools

One of the key stakeholder groups and beneficiaries of the scheme will be the colleges located on Venns Lane and Folly Lane at the top of the hill. The scheme will connect students and staff to the city centre and public transport facilities. The Royal National College for the Blind is also on Venns Lane and will require particular consideration within the scheme for including provision for visually impaired pedestrians.

2.2 Businesses in the vicinity of the scheme

Businesses operating in the vicinity of the works may be directly impacted in the physical operation of their business and indirectly as a result of the presence of the works. Although it is predominantly a residential road the route is a key radial route into the city. These stakeholders are proposed to be broken down into two groups:

- Businesses on or served off Aylestone Hill who will have works immediately in front of their property.
- Other businesses who will have site traffic passing their property, or are close to the works area. We consider these to be businesses in Rockfield Road, the Brook Retail Park and around Station Approach.

2.3 Statutory Authorities

The presence of the works will impact a number of statutory authorities and how they undertake their functions. The relevant authorities are considered to be:

- Utility companies
- Emergency services (ambulance, fire & police)

2.4 Local Members

Local members are one route through which the general public make contact with the council in relation to the activities of the council. Although the works are located in the central ward it is considered that, based on the magnitude of the expenditure and the significance of the project, all Herefordshire Councillors should be included, together with members of Hereford City Council and the local Members of Parliament.

2.5 Local Organisations

Local organisations are another route through which key parts of the community can be engaged and informed of the proposed schemes. This is particularly relevant for parts of the community which may not be captured through the normal communication process. Other organisations support or act as an overarching group for parts of the community. By communicating the information to organisations that work with these groups they can support with a more targeted dissemination of information.

The relevant organisations are considered to be:

- Hereford Business Improvement District
- Local Taxi companies
- Local public transport companies
- Hereford Disability United
- Hereford Vision Links
- Deaf Direct
- Hereford Mobility Centre
- Hereford Shop Mobility
- Hereford Civic Society
- Other schools & Colleges within the City of Hereford
- Visit Herefordshire
- Chamber of Commerce
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Royal Mail

2.6 Local Community

The local community of Hereford will have an interest and a contribution to make to the development of the scheme, both in terms of understanding what is being done and its benefit, as well as the impact on them. It will be necessary to liaise with the community in a proactive way such that they can be aware of the scheme how they can contribute to its development and how it's delivery may impact their day to day activities.

2.7 Visitors and Tourists

As Hereford is the 'County Town' of Herefordshire, it attracts visitors both from within the county, as well as tourists from a wider area. As the scheme is on a key route into the historic city centre, it has the potential to impact on visitors to Hereford. The communications regarding the project should aim to inform visitors and tourists as far as is possible. To this end the Visit Herefordshire organisation has been included in the list of organisations above.

3.0 Communication Methodology

The communication methodology has been developed to address both the requirements of different stakeholders as well as the different content that is to be communicated. The method of delivery of the communication information will utilise a number of forms based on the requirements and content.

3.1 Communication Content Overview

The communication information will need to provide varying levels of information to different groups and at different times. All communication information will need to work within the Herefordshire Council key messaging for the project as identified above. This will be the basis of the message that all communications should keep to.

Levels of communication information will take the form of the following:

- General scheme information outlining the basis and benefits of it and how we are seeking input.
- Specific information on how people can contribute to the development of the scheme and how they can comment on the proposals as they come forward.
- General information about the delivery of the scheme and the impacts and mitigations for the scheme delivery.
- Specific information relating to the detail of the scheme, how it will be delivered and how the impacts are to be mitigated.
- General information relating to the progress of the works and any changes to original plans.

- Specific information relating to the progress of the works and changes to originally advised information.
- Responses to ad hoc queries.
- Information for the public about access to affected premises
- Formal complaints and compliments will be managed through existing processes.

3.2 Communication content specifics

The following specific elements of content are envisaged:

- Data collection on vehicle, pedestrian and cycle flows to confirm baseline conditions
- Community surveys to identify issue aims and objectives along the route corridor
- Community surveys to collate feedback on detailed proposals
- Data collection on vehicle, pedestrian and cycle flows to confirm uptake at 6 and 12 months post scheme completion
- Community surveys to collate feedback post completion

3.3 Communication Channels

In order to reach the target audience in the most effective way a range of communication channels will be utilised. The proposed channels are:

- Meetings
- Letters / e-mail to business residents and other key stakeholders
- Key stakeholder update briefs
- Press releases
- Content on Herefordshire Councils website
- Online engagement platforms
- Social Media
- Telephone enquiries
- Site notices & Signage

The key aspects of these channels are detailed below:

3.3.1 Meetings

- Proactive meetings will be undertaken to inform progress with key internal stakeholders
- Engagement with affected businesses in advance of the works.

3.3.2 Letters / E-mail

- Proactive letters to affected businesses detailing works information
- Proactive letters to wider stakeholders detailing works information and wider messaging
- Reactive communication in response to enquires/complaints/compliments

3.3.3 Press Releases

Press releases to be issued at key points

3.3.4 Herefordshire Council Website

The Herefordshire Council web site will offer an overview of the proposed scheme as it develops and will direct people to the online engagement platform as well as providing supplementary documents and information.

3.3.5 Online engagement

An online engagement platform will be used to seek input to support the development of the scheme design and to support feedback on scheme proposals as they emerge.

3.3.6 Social Media

Information will be provided on social media will typically:

- Highlight opportunities to contribute to the development of the scheme
- Provide regular updates on the scheme

3.3.7 Site Notices & Signage

The site notices will be the public facing aspect of the works and will display.

- Joint HC / Contractor branding
- Scheme name and business open as usual messaging
- Open as usual and directional signs for businesses with frontages impacted by works.

3.4 Communication Programme

There will be a requirement to communicate information about the project prior to and throughout the delivery of the scheme. The key programme requirements are identified below:

- Prior to the commencement of the scheme to communicate the benefits and objectives of the scheme.
- Initial engagement to seek views on the core aspects of the scheme
- Further engagement to seek feedback on the detailed scheme proposals
- Prior to the commencement of the scheme delivery to inform those directly impacted by the works and agree detailed arrangements.
- Throughout the delivery of the scheme to provide updates on the progress of the scheme. It is proposed updates be prepared by the project team on scheme progress which can be circulated to the communications team for use as required in proactive and reactive communications.
- At the end of the scheme to confirm completion and offer thanks for working with us on scheme development and during scheme delivery.
- Following a period of operation engagement to assess the performance of the measures introduced.

4.0 Review & Monitoring

The design and works extend over a fifteen month period, and it is important that the communication plan is able to evolve and develop to ensure it remains appropriate and effective. The communications will be reviewed as part of regular project team meetings and this communications plan will be updated as required.