

Tackling Congestion in Cambridgeshire – Communication and Engagement Programme

Responses received directly by Cambridgeshire County Council

May 2008

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report presents findings from the communication and engagement programme about the Council's proposals for tackling congestion in Cambridgeshire.
- 1.2 The programme ran between November 2007 and March 2008. It involved a number of different activities including:
 - Media relations, advertising and direct mail to raise awareness of the Council's proposals for tackling congestion
 - New web pages with information about the proposals
 - 37 public roadshows across Cambridgeshire giving people the opportunity to find out more about the proposals
 - An online survey and face-to-face surveys at the roadshows and in people's homes
 - Facilitated workshops with local businesses, organisations and groups
 - Presentations and meetings with local businesses, organisations and groups
- 1.3 Findings from the online and face-to-face surveys carried out at the roadshows and in people's homes are being presented by MRUK who conducted the surveys for the Council.
- 1.4 Findings from the facilitated workshops are being presented by Dialogue by Design who facilitated the workshops for the Council.
- 1.5 This report presents a summary of the findings from the responses received directly by the Council.
- 1.6 The reporting of these responses has focused on key themes and issues that have been raised. It is not possible to quantify these responses in terms of support and opposition, although it is fair to say the vast majority of respondents recognise that something must be done to tackle congestion.

2.0 Objectives of the communication & engagement strategy

- 2.1 The overall objectives of the communication and engagement strategy were to:
 - Explain the congestion problems we face in coming years
 - Gain understanding for these congestion problems
 - Explain the Council's vision for tackling congestion

- Gather feedback on the vision
- Analyse this feedback and incorporate it into proposals
- Demonstrate to the public and stakeholders that this feedback has been taken into account
- As far as possible, reach a consensus on the way to proceed with the vision

2.2 The programme intended to stimulate debate, increase understanding and gather feedback; it was not solely designed to find out how many people supported or opposed the Council's proposals (although some data will be generated by the survey results). The Council is grateful to the hundreds of local businesses, organisations and groups and the thousands of local residents who have participated in this debate and engaged with us about the challenges faced in tackling congestion.

3.0 Feedback from the public

- 3.1 The Council received 358 items of correspondence from members of the public during the communication and engagement programme. This included letters and emails through the Council's 'Tackling Congestion in Cambridgeshire' web pages. Council officers also received verbal feedback at the 37 public roadshows held across the county.
- 3.2 The correspondence covered a wide range of issues and much of the correspondence fell into three categories: requesting clarity, raising concerns and making suggestions.
- 3.3 Many people asked about concessions and exemptions from the congestion charge. People asked if motorcycles would be included in the charge and whether specific sites such as the Science Park, Addenbrooke's and Park & Ride sites were within the charging zone. People also wanted to know what the alternative would be if the Council did not introduce a congestion charge.
- 3.4 Some concerns were expressed about the proposals to increase the number of bus services in the City Centre. A number of people also expressed concern at the cost of public transport and stated that bus travel needs to be cheaper to encourage more people to use it. Many people expressed concerns about the impact of the congestion charge on lower paid workers, shift workers and volunteers. People raised concerns about incurring the congestion charge when driving out of the city. They stated there were no viable alternatives to the private car for travelling to many employment destinations outside of the city. People expressed concerns about confidentiality issues regarding the use of cameras and monitoring systems.
- 3.5 A number of additional suggestions for tackling congestion were also made. These included: more school buses and drop off points at Park & Ride sites for people to drop school children; implementing public transport, cycling and walking improvements and waiting to see if congestion charging is still needed; building an inner ring road; providing more direct bus services to the City Centre; additional Park & Ride facilities; letting congestion self-regulate itself; reducing City Centre parking facilities to encourage Park & Ride use; encouraging car pooling; linking Park & Ride charges to vehicles rather than people; segregating cycle routes to make them more attractive to potential cyclists; and considering a tram system.

3.6 Cambridgeshire County Councillor John Reynolds also produced his own questionnaire about the Council's proposals for tackling congestion and distributed it to residents in his division (Girton, Bar Hill, Dry Drayton, Lolworth and Boxworth). Councillor Reynolds submitted 321 completed questionnaires to the Council. The results of the questionnaire showed the vast majority of residents supported improvements to public transport, walking and cycling facilities and 70% of respondents opposed a congestion charge in Cambridge. Cllr Reynolds' questionnaire also asked a separate question of just Girton residents about whether Girton should be entirely outside of the congestion charging zone. 81% of Girton residents agreed that Girton should be outside the zone.

4.0 Feedback from local groups and organisations

4.1 Key stakeholder breakfast briefing

In December 2007 a breakfast briefing was held for key businesses and business support organisations in Cambridgeshire (see Appendix A for list of attendees). A presentation about the Council's proposals was given and Councillor Roy Pegram, Deputy Leader of Cambridgeshire County Council chaired a question and answer session.

4.1.1 During the question and answer session participants sought clarity on issues such as the conditions of funding from the Transport Innovation Fund and whether the model stating 'business hours saved' included the time it takes to travel to and from work.

4.1.2 Participants also raised concerns including: public transport not providing viable alternatives to the private car for shift workers; A14 improvements not being completed by the time congestion charging comes into effect; the need to guarantee the congestion charge fee and area it covers will be maintained for a fixed period of time; proposals appearing to be a fait accompli; and capacity at Park & Ride sites.

4.1.3 The following suggestions were made by participants: a central bus terminal is needed in the City Centre; a phased approach for the introduction of congestion charge could be advantageous; utility companies should be exempt from the charge; innovative school travel solutions need to be implemented; and a rebate for City Council residents will need to be made via Council Tax.

4.2 Meetings with local organisations and groups

During the communication and engagement programme Council officers met with local organisations and groups to discuss the proposals for tackling congestion. The meetings provided opportunities to ask questions, obtain clarity and feedback information on issues that were specific to the organisation or group (see Appendix B for list of organisations and groups that the Council met with).

4.2.1 A number of organisations that participated in meetings also went on to submit formal written responses to the Council. These are covered in section 4.3 of the report.

4.2.2 A wide range of issues were raised at the meetings with local organisations and groups. They included:

- The need to consider public transport improvements beyond Cambridge

- Staff who already cycle or use Park & Ride will benefit from improvements to Park & Ride facilities and cycle networks
- There is significant police movement around the City during the proposed charging period
- From an operational perspective (Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service & East of England Ambulance Service), anything that relieves congestion is a benefit
- Support/office based staff are likely to be affected by the congestion charge
- Need to understand how organisations would be exempted/charged if the congestion charge were introduced. Concerns about financial and administrative implications
- Free bus travel for under 16s and 16-18 year olds in full time education would lead to greater use of public transport through familiarisation
- Staff may request shift changes to avoid the charging period. This could create a reduction in cover and resilience levels, as all vehicles will have to be back at base to enable this to happen
- Many people with disabilities are dependent on private car travel and also on the services of volunteers who provide transport services
- Reimbursing volunteers for incurred charges could threaten budgets and potentially deter volunteers
- Delivery drivers have no alternative to using their own vehicular transport. They should be exempt

4.3 Written responses from local groups and organisations received by the Council

Throughout the course of the communication and engagement programme the Council received a total of 18 written submissions from local groups and organisations (see Appendix C for list of groups and organisations). Many of these submissions were made after meetings and discussions with Council officers.

- 4.3.1 Key issues raised in these responses included: the need for public transport, walking and cycling improvements; the need to consider and address the impact of the congestion charge on patients, volunteers, staff and carers; potential for businesses to relocate outside of Cambridge if a charge is introduced; practical considerations of how the charge would affect people living near to the boundary (access to Park & Ride sites and routes out of the city); the belief that a congestion charge will affect the cost of living and future prosperity of the City and its businesses; free concessionary bus passes, the Guided Busway and improvements to rural services will increase public transport usage without the need for congestion charging.
- 4.3.2 Brief summaries of the responses submitted by Cambridge City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and the University of Cambridge are outlined below.
- 4.3.3 *Cambridge City Council*
The City Council stated three areas of concern in relation to the County's proposals for tackling congestion:
1. The needs of City residents
 2. Public transport
 3. Emissions and climate change

In terms of City residents, the City Council believes there is a need for residents' discounts as well as exemptions for special needs groups.

The City Council stated there is a need for a detailed programme of public transport infrastructure improvements in the City and also a clear understanding of how the increased number of buses can be dealt with in the City Centre.

In relation to emissions and climate change, the City Council believes there is a strong case for variable tariffs across a range of vehicles with penal rates for very high emissions, low rates for very low emissions and grades in between. It believes the Council's proposals are weak on climate change objectives.

4.3.4 *South Cambridgeshire District Council*

The District Council is convinced a step change in accessibility is needed if the Cambridge sub-region is to accommodate high levels of growth. It welcomes the proposed public transport and other non-car improvements but considers there to be insufficient practical alternatives to the car in the proposals for people living in rural areas.

The District Council believes the County Council should introduce the public transport and other non-car improvements before deciding whether any step change in traffic management measures is necessary. The District Council believes there is insufficient information to form a view on whether congestion charging is the most appropriate response in terms of managing demand for private car travel.

4.3.5 *Cambridge University Hospitals, NHS Foundation Trust (Addenbrooke's)*

Whilst the Trust supports the need to reduce congestion and some form of demand management/charging, it believes the Addenbrooke's campus should be outside of the congestion charging zone.

The trust suggests the Addenbrooke's Access Road will keep a significant amount of traffic destined for the campus away from the City Centre. The trust has already had a lot of success with its Travel Plan and has reduced the number of cars accessing the site.

The trust believes patients and visitors should be exempt and questions the costs involved in reimbursing volunteers if a congestion charge is introduced. The trust states that public transport services are not adequate for staff who work at a 24/7 facility.

4.3.6 *University of Cambridge*

The University recognises that due to the growth planned for the Cambridge sub-region, it will be necessary to improve the quality and quantity of walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure. It generally supports the proposals to improve the number and frequency of bus services but also has specific concerns such as the need to improve rural and inter-urban bus services for staff living in villages and market towns around Cambridge.

In relation to the congestion charging proposals, the University believes the main negative impacts would be the increased travel costs for staff and increased operational costs for the University. However, the University also recognises the

congestion charge would potentially bring benefits in terms of reducing congestion and journey times and the Transport Innovation Fund offers the best opportunity for securing a substantial amount of funding for infrastructure and service improvements.

The University does not raise objections in principle to the introduction of congestion charging but is concerned about points of detail.

5.0 Summary of key issues raised during the communication and engagement programme

- 5.1 Many respondents recognised the impact of the growth agenda on Cambridgeshire's traffic issues. Some respondents believed too much growth and house building was taking place and this should be restricted to help solve congestion problems. Others believed the Council should let congestion regulate itself by doing nothing to tackle the problems.
 - 5.1.1 Others recognised growth was a positive thing because it meant more affordable houses and more businesses in Cambridge. The vast majority of responses agreed the Council should be providing better alternatives to the car to help reduce the number of people who drive into Cambridge. Some people also recognised the need for the Council to do something else to manage demand for car travel in the City and asked about other demand management options. A number of respondents expressed the view that congestion charging could drive businesses away from Cambridge.
- 5.2 The majority of respondents had strong views that the Council must improve alternatives to the private car for travelling into Cambridge. A lot of responses went into great detail about the Council's specific proposals for public transport and cycling improvements and made further suggestions. Many respondents supported the idea of increasing the frequency of bus services.
 - 5.2.1 However, respondents also questioned the affordability of public transport and the capacity of roads in the City Centre to cope with more buses. People wanted a more joined-up public transport system with better interchanges between different transport modes. A large number of respondents stated that if a congestion charge were to be introduced, better alternatives for travelling into Cambridge must be in place first.
- 5.3 Whilst a number of key stakeholders mentioned the need to use transport measures to help tackle emissions and climate change issues, very few responses from the public mentioned this.
- 5.4 Respondents also raised the issue of term-time traffic and the need to reduce the number of people who drive children to school. A number of specific suggestions were made around increasing bus services and providing drop-off facilities at Park & Ride services. There was a strong feeling that more has to be done to dissuade parents from driving children to school.
- 5.5 Many respondents expressed concern about the impact of a congestion charge on specific groups. A large number of people were concerned about the impact of a charge on shift workers who had no alternatives for getting to work when their shift

times meant they could not use public transport, but had to make some part of their journey during the proposed charging period. Respondents also expressed concern about the financial impact of the charge on lower paid workers.

- 5.5.1 Respondents were also concerned about the impact of the charge on patients, carers, volunteers, staff and other people involved in health and caring services.
- 5.5.2 The impact of the charge on City residents, people driving out of Cambridge, delivery drivers and other essential users and people driving into Cambridge from rural locations who have no viable public transport alternatives, was also raised repeatedly.
- 5.5.3 Respondents questioned the fairness and equity of charging drivers who had no alternatives to driving their vehicles in the charging zone during the 7.30-9.30 am charging period.
- 5.6 A large number of respondents requested more detail and clarification about the proposals. People wanted to know specifically how the congestion charge would be collected and where the cameras would be and how specific public transport improvements like the new railway station at Chesterton would affect current rail services.

Appendix A

List of attendees from stakeholder breakfast briefing

Bidwells
Cambridge Econometrics
Cambridge Building Society
Cambridge City Council
Cambridge Regional College
Cambridgeshire Chamber of Commerce
East Cambridgeshire District Council
East of England Strategic Health Authority
Hills Road Sixth Form College
Marshall Motor Group
Marshalls
RAC
Russells
Savills
South Cambridgeshire District Council
St John's Innovation Centre
Stagecoach
Cambridgeshire Constabulary
David Ball Group
Cambridgeshire Primary Care Trust
Cambridge Water Company
University of Cambridge

Appendix B

List of organisations and groups the Council met with (excluding organisation/groups who then submitted a written response)

Bus Operators – Norfolk Green, Whippet Coaches, Stagecoach, Cavalier Contracts
Cambridgeshire Constabulary
Cambridge Fire & Rescue Service
Cambridge Youth Parliament
CHCDA – Taxi Drivers
East of England Ambulance Service
Groups representing People with Disabilities – Cam Sight, Headway, Mobilise, Meldreth
Manor School, Opportunities without Limits, Rowan Humberstone
Road Haulage Association – Southern & Eastern Region

Appendix C

List of groups and organisations that submitted a written response

Andrew Lansley MP
British Antarctic Survey
Bursar Environmental Sub-Committee
Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (Addenbrooke's)
Cambridge City Council
Cambridge Cycling Campaign
Cambridge Network
CBI East of England
City of Cambridge Conservative Association
East of England Development Agency
Girton College
Girton Parish Council
Magdalene College
Medical Research Council
New Generation Forum
Rescue Service Delivery (AA, Green Flag and RAC)
St John's College
South Cambridgeshire District Council
Sustrans
University of Cambridge