

## **SAFER ROUTES TO SCHOOL**

**Report By: HEAD OF POLICY AND RESOURCES**

### **Wards Affected**

Countywide.

### **Purpose**

1. To review the opportunities, and action taken to date, for developing arrangements designed to produce safer routes to schools.

### **Financial Implications**

2. As specified in this report.

### **Report – Progress on Safer Routes to School Projects**

3. Introduction
4. The Safer Routes to School (SRTS) initiative has been developed through national pilot studies conducted by Sustrans and supported by Government. A SRTS project includes an analysis of the travel patterns at a school, surveys of the school and local highway environment and surveys of the attitudes and concerns of pupils, parents and teachers regarding travel to and from school. The project aims to identify a range of measures which enable more children to walk, cycle and use public transport for the school run which in turn can increase the health of children, provide greater road safety and reduce congestion. County schools have been prioritised so that schools with the greatest potential for increased walking and cycling and accident savings are dealt with in the early years of the programme. So far, the Council has embarked on 3 Phases, the first Phase of studies having commenced in 2000. Progress on Phases 2 and 3 is provided below and at Appendix 1.
5. Progress on Phase 2 projects  
Final Study Reports will be completed by the end of November 2003, covering the following schools:

Broadlands Primary (Hereford)  
St Thomas Cantilupe Primary (Hereford)  
Ledbury Primary  
Leominster Primary  
John Masefield Secondary (Ledbury)

A final report for Haywood High School has already been completed.

Whilst there has been a lengthy delay in finalising these reports, infrastructure improvement works have been implemented or are programmed for completion in 2003/4 (See Appendix 1 attached to this Report).

6. Progress on Phase 3 projects  
Draft infrastructure proposals will be provided by December 2003. Consultation on the draft proposals will be scheduled at the Phase 3 schools (listed below) between January and February 2004:

Ashfield Park Primary (Ross)  
John Kyrle High (Ross)  
Hampton Dene Primary  
St Paul's Primary (Hereford)  
St Peters Primary (Bromyard)  
Holmer Primary (Hereford)  
Our Lady's RC Primary (Hereford)

St Mary's Primary (Credenhill) on hold due to proposed school move.

7. Following the consultation period it is anticipated that Reports will be finalised by the end of 2003/4 enabling the Council to commence providing infrastructure improvements in 2004/5 – some larger or more complicated schemes such as those requiring traffic regulation orders may take longer to implement.

### **Recruitment of School Travel Advisers**

8. A review of the process for undertaking the Safer Routes to School studies was carried out in early 2003 and reported to Environment Programme Panel (20 February 2003) and Education Scrutiny Committee (26 March 2003). The review identified the need to ensure that schools benefiting from Safer Routes to School improvements in the future should begin work on developing their own school travel plans in advance. The Report recognised the need to allocate additional resources to provide a good level of support for schools to help them through this process.
9. It is proposed that the revised approach is introduced to commence in the next financial year and consequently, it is intended to appoint a School Travel Adviser(s) using Local Transport Plan funding allocated for Safer Routes to School Training Support. Discussions between the Transportation Unit and Education Directorate have identified a best practice example in North Yorkshire where supply teachers have been recruited as School Travel Advisers. Employing School Travel Advisers with teaching experience is considered particularly effective as the Advisers need a good understanding of how schools work including relationships with PTA and School Governors, the potential benefits for the school curriculum, pressures on teacher's time and communicating with pupils and their parents.

### **Department for Transport and Department for Education and Skills joint initiative on School Travel April 2004 – March 2006**

10. In September 2003, DfT and DfES made a joint announcement about the provision of more than £50m over the next 2 years to help support the development of school travel plans. An action plan was also launched setting out proposals encouraging schools and local authorities to work together to:
- Put in place a school travel plan over the next few years, after consulting parents, pupils and local transport organisations. Such plans should cover safer routes to

school, road crossings, local speed restrictions, dedicated cycle ways, secure cycle storage, sufficient locker space and improved public transport provision;

- Develop road safety skills, particularly at primary schools. Cycle training, for example, has helped reduce child cyclist casualties by a quarter in York;
- Working with the police, bus operators and the local community to promote positive behaviour by pupils on their journey to and from school, perhaps rewarding good behaviour;
- Work with local transport bodies on how transport can support the extended school day. For example, in Merseyside there is a sweeper bus which caters for pupils arriving or staying late at school;
- Consider whether staggering school opening hours can allow pupils access to a wider range of school based activities;
- Provide secure cycle storage and lockers, appropriate bus shelters etc;
- Use geography, Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE), citizenship and other lessons to explain the benefits of sustainable travel;
- Work with children with Special Education Needs (SEN) to prepare them for independent travel wherever possible.

11. The Government will provide funding to support sustainable school travel by:

- Providing £7.5m per year for at least 2 years to fund more local authority based school travel advisers who will help schools carry out surveys and prepare plans;
- Allocating £5,000 for a typical primary school and £10,000 for a typical secondary, through DfES's capital programme, to help schools upgrade their travel facilities. **This will be dependent on the school having a signed off school travel plan.**

12. Whilst details are still emerging as to how this funding will be allocated it is likely that the Council will receive a specific allocation for the School Travel Advisers. In return for this allocation, Government will be seeking a commitment from the Council that the funding will be used in support of school travel plans and that information will be provided to DfT and DfES in the form of annual reports demonstrating that progress is being made. Future funding will be influenced by the rate of progress on implementing school travel plans and reducing the proportion of children travelling to school by car.

### **Planned Action**

13. It is proposed to combine the recently announced DfT/DfES funding for School Travel Advisers (£32,000 in 2004/05 and 2005/06) with that earmarked within the LTP budget (£25,000 per annum as described in 9 above) to establish a good level of support for County Schools seeking to develop a School Travel Plan and thus reduce the overall number of pupils being driven to school. The additional funding to be provided by Government should enable excellent additionality to the project, extending the support to schools which are not currently involved in Safer Routes to School. Many more schools would benefit:

- schools which are required to develop a School Travel Plan as a result of a planning condition associated with site relocation (i.e. Cradley Primary),
- schools that are independently seeking to address their travel issues (i.e. Burghill Primary School), and
- the schools that will be keen to access the £5 - £10k grants per school earmarked by Government for which a signed off travel plan will be required.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**The Committee are asked to consider the action plan set out in this report, and suggest ways in which it might be improved or further developed.**

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**Appendix 1 : Safer Routes To School Phase 2 Infrastructure Schemes 2003/4**