



Response to the Gloucestershire County Council Budget 2022-2023

20 January 2022

Dear Gloucestershire County Council,

Many thanks for the opportunity to review and comment on the 2022-2023 budget. As the lead authority for highways, and with a third of transport emissions in Gloucestershire being attributed to motor vehicles, this is a vital budget for the county to begin moving towards being greener and more equitable in how people move. We have as a committee reviewed the budget proposals and the detail of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) spending plan to inform our response.

1. Despite the Greener Gloucestershire headline, the highways component of the budget continues to be dominated by road expansion and motor vehicle capacity increasing schemes. These are not compatible with achieving the ambitions of the climate emergency for decarbonising transport, or in addressing current levels of road danger. Ongoing increases in road capacity will induce further motor vehicle trips, and the net effect jeopardises any benefit that might be achieved through promised investments in public and active transport. We believe that a truly 'green budget' would have rebased investment more substantially away from schemes where the primary purpose is benefit to private motor vehicles.
2. Allocations for cycling outside of the one or two signature schemes is minimal. Whilst there may be opportunities for general highways monies to benefit cycling, we believe that the council should match its stated strategic priority by ringfencing a larger portion of money specifically for local highways interventions to benefit active travel, for example at key pinch points, barriers and areas with high collision rates or high numbers of vulnerable individuals. This will increase transparency, and ensure that there is fair debate on local priorities for investment.
3. We have previously written of our concern that the opportunity cost of focussing more than five million pounds of council tax investment into the single 26-mile spine route is high. Whilst some sections, such as the connection between Bishops Cleeve and Cheltenham are vital, we believe quieter leisure sections should have lower priority in this budget compared to a broader mix of locality-focussed, higher-impact interventions in urban centres across the county, where the largest potential for transport modal shift could be achieved.
4. The budget assumes that cycling rates can be rapidly increased through cycling 'schemes'. However, the vast majority of journeys will begin or end away from any signature scheme, and the county needs quieter, calmer roads with less incentives for driving across its urban and rural areas before the majority of residents will feel confident using a cycle for transport. We are therefore disappointed to see minimal

additional investment in road harm reduction. We believe this was a budget that could have frontloaded investment ready for rapid 20mph speed limit roll outs, healthy low traffic neighbourhoods, and a more integrated approach to reducing illegal speeding and hazardous driving.

5. We observe that the majority of promised cycle infrastructure, particularly the Bishop's Cleeve cycleway is dependent on external grant funding. We are not aware that the council has so far been successful in securing this funding, and it is therefore important that the budget is transparent on the likelihood of delivery, given the headline promise of the budget consultation, or that sufficient contingency is available should current grant applications be unsuccessful.
6. We recognise that the addition of the southbound climber lane to the A435 Charlton landslip repairs is an opportunistic intervention, but again highlight this is a £500,000 expenditure on a route that will benefit only a limited number of largely leisure riders, whilst creating complex ongoing maintenance responsibilities for the council.
7. We note the investment in electric vehicles, but highlight the research by the UK's independent climate change committee that even widespread EV adoption will be insufficient to meet local climate goals. We also record our concern that the increased road danger presented by many EVs which are generally larger and heavier, but gain faster acceleration. A budget that over-focusses on electric vehicle solutions will have a significant adverse impact on levels of road danger, particularly for those choosing not to travel by private motor vehicle, and will potentially exclude some local communities and businesses. The council should carefully consider this and ensure it takes an holistic approach to decarbonising transport.
8. The county is obviously dependent on external grants for the majority of its active travel schemes. In anticipation of future budgets, we believe that the council should shift its approach to designing and bidding for highways schemes to ensure more of them have primary benefit to public and active travellers.

The Cheltenham & Tewkesbury Cycling Campaign is eager to work with Gloucestershire County Council to help it achieve its ambition for a Greener Gloucestershire, through the delivery of schemes and measures that benefit a wide and inclusive range of cycle users. We hope that there will be opportunities for our expertise and range of community voices to help you progress towards this in the coming year.

Yours faithfully

Andre Curtis

Chair, on behalf of the committee of the Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Cycling Campaign

About the campaign

Cheltenham & Tewkesbury Cycling Campaign (C&TCC) has represented cyclists in Cheltenham and Tewkesbury for more than 40 years and is one of the oldest local cycling campaigns in the UK. Although our key areas of focus are Cheltenham and Tewkesbury, we also have wider interests when it concerns the ability of people to cycle to or from our nominal area. Most of our members are not 'enthusiast' or fast cyclists, but people concerned primarily with making everyday journeys by bike as a practical means of transport.

Families make up around half of our membership, with many of our other members having children, whom they have successfully taught to cycle. Some of our members are or have been actively involved in cycle training, the use of cycles by less able members of the community and the investigation of crashes involving cyclists. Because of our background knowledge acquired over many years, we have a very good understanding of cycling, the needs of cyclists of different genres, and what are the key priorities to make cycling safe and popular.

C&TCC regards cycling as an activity for the broadest cross-section of society and for diverse purposes. We see no contradiction in supporting less able people to make many more short, local journeys by bike and in supporting those who wish to travel further or faster. We are greatly opposed to the stigmatisation of anyone who cycles or policies which ignore the needs of any group of current or potential cyclists.

More information about the campaign at www.cyclecheltenham.org.uk