

Item 7: Department for Transport cycling funding & LSTF (Cath Hart)

Two significant amounts of money for improving sustainable transport provision have been secured following successful bids to central government, both to be spent by March 2015.

- Local Strategic Transport Fund (LSTF) is delivering a range of projects including new and improved paths, road improvements and bus services, across the New Forest and the South Downs National Parks
- Cycling in the National Park; the New Forest National Park's bid was recently announced to be successful. The press release below gives some details and more information will be available at the meeting.

Family-friendly cycling in the New Forest given a £3.6m boost

(Monday 12 August 2013)

An innovative scheme for everyday family cycling in the New Forest National Park has been awarded £3.6m by the government, which will help create jobs and provide a boost to the local economy.

The New Forest National Park is one of four National Parks to benefit from a share of the Department for Transport's (DfT) £17m funding pot. The government money will be match funded with £2.2m from the private sector and local authorities.

The DfT investment is expected to create more than 30 new jobs and generate income for local businesses as well as improve cycling facilities and management for residents and visitors. The proposed projects will promote active family lifestyles, respect the sensitive character of the New Forest and replace an estimated 127,000 car journeys with bike trips every year.

The proposed programme includes:

- *Support for a private sector led family cycling centre adjacent to Brockenhurst rail station with bike hire, servicing, showers, lockers, courses, and visitor information*
- *A network of mobile bike docking stations, where people can hire a bike and drop it back at a number of locations around the National Park*
- *A network of pedal buses linking communities and attractions, where up to eight passengers can help the driver power the 'bus' to the next stop*
- *A new grant fund to help tourism businesses and communities provide high-quality facilities for cyclists*
- *Improvements to signage on existing cycle routes, mainly around the edge of the National Park and which are away from the Crown lands managed by the Forestry Commission.*

The DfT said the New Forest National Park Authority was awarded the funding because its proposal matched the brief of being innovative and creative, and able to be achieved by March 2015.

Julian Johnson, chairman of the New Forest National Park Authority, said: 'This scheme will mean that leaving your car at home and choosing to cycle to and around the National Park will be much more appealing for families. This is good news for our health, in reducing traffic and for protecting this nationally-important landscape.'

The family-friendly scheme has the backing of a wide range of organisations including the Forestry Commission, Hampshire County Council, Wiltshire Council, New Forest Tourism Association, South West Trains, New Forest District Council and the New Forest Access Forum.

Barry Rickman, leader of New Forest District Council, said: 'Cycling already provides support to the New Forest's economy and with it the creation of associated employment. We are pleased that this economic growth opportunity is recognised within the scheme and that plans are in place throughout the towns and villages that make up the forest's local community.'

Cllr Seán Woodward, Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Environment at Hampshire County Council, said: 'The County Council wants to encourage people to leave the car at home and take up healthier travel choices, such as walking and cycling where they can. This family-friendly scheme providing better facilities for leisure cyclists will help change the way cycling is perceived and promoted in the New Forest, as well as boosting the local economy and helping reduce traffic in and around the National Park.'

Mike Seddon, deputy surveyor at the Forestry Commission, said: 'We see the scheme as being instrumental in improving health and well-being, bringing growth and sustainability to the area in relation to tourism and leisure in a rural economy and helping to sustain the internationally important and designated landscapes of the New Forest.'

Stephen Lorton, chairman of the New Forest Tourism Association, said: 'This fund will provide improvements to the infrastructure through both capital investment and innovative concepts, which in time will provide industry leading facilities for leisure cyclists to enjoy. Not only will this bring tangible benefits but also aid the local economy in a number of key areas.'

The family cycling funding also complements the work of the National Park Authority to encourage 370,000 people travelling to the New Forest to get out of their cars and use sustainable transport by March 2015.

The bid document is available to view on the New Forest National Park Authority website at www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/linking_communities_fund