

East Suffolk Community Partnership Board. Monday 7th December 2020

Report by Nick Khan on behalf of the Transport Task Group.

1. Recap:

The Community Partnerships have identified many dimensions to the transport priority which can largely be categorised in three main issues:

- Rural Transport (and access to services)
- Community Transport
- Active and sustainable travel

The Community Partnerships reviewed their priorities in light of the Covid-19 response and transport issues remain a priority and / or a key element of the discussions in many of the partnerships, particularly given the links to other key areas of activity e.g. isolation, health and wellbeing, employment and training opportunities, and youth activities. There is a strong desire amongst their memberships to address these challenges.

At its meeting in September the Board agreed to:

- Establish a Task Group to work up solutions.
- Give the Transport priority substantive focus during the Community Partnership Annual Forum in November.
- Consider commissioning some expertise to work with the Board to identify potential 'quick win' transport projects and help local organisations and groups to develop these.
- be prepared to allocate funding from the 2020/21 Community Partnership Board budget to this priority ringfenced to support local project development and delivery.

This report and associated outcome proposals will update the Board on progress.

2. National / Regional / local Context:

Rural transport, community transport and active travel represent significant strategic challenges, with many of the symptoms experienced at local level arising from national delivery models and funding that don't work as well for residents in non-metropolitan parts of the UK.

Rural and Community Transport:

As much of East Suffolk is rural, combined with geographic limitations through the location of rivers, this presents some issues for access to services by public transport. For much of the district the A12 provides a key north/south route and a link for the market towns and villages in the district. The resilience of the road, in the face of issues such as flooding, is therefore a critical issue in that it can result in communities being further isolated.

There is an East Suffolk railway line running through the district providing direct access to several market towns and several other villages. The line currently has limitations to the level of service that can be provided. However, there is an opportunity to encourage greater use of the service and scope to improve integrated transport links at the East Suffolk Line Stations.

Throughout the wider district access to services by public transport can be difficult, particularly in the more remote parts of the district. Conditions are better in the market towns where several commercially viable bus services operate. Opportunities exist to build on the innovative demand responsive public transport arrangements set up to service this area.

Active Travel:

Post-COVID-19, the potential role of active travel has increased, as capacity and public attitudes to using public transport have declined. However, the private car is not always a viable option, and the Government set out its ambition to boost active travel in [Gear Change](#), alongside £2bn investment. Their target is for half of all journeys in towns and cities to be made by active travel by 2030. However, Gear Change poses challenges for our region. It favours urban locations, with a focus on funding only those projects that would give transformational infrastructure delivery.

Our region faces significant competition from elsewhere in the UK in securing significant investment. We have seen over the last 5-10 years across the UK that challenges in delivering active travel generally occur at the local level, with opposition from businesses and residents. Winning hearts and minds of local partners and communities is key to success. Across the UK, the DfT's first round of Emergency Active Travel Funds gave very little time for consultation to take place with residents – leading to business backlash on reallocation of road-space.

Collaboration is key. Localities need to work together on designing and developing successful approaches, with a clear and evidenced plan, incorporating wider measures, as well as widespread support from a range of local partners.

3. Influencing the agenda:

The following important national/regional/county transport links have already been made via the work of the Transport Task Group:

The Public Transport Consortium promote passenger transport issues on behalf of non-metropolitan authorities, supporting effective local decisions on public transport for the benefit of local citizens. As a special interest group of the Local Government Association (LGA), the Consortium represents the public transport interests of shire counties and unitary authorities in England and Wales, and can directly lobby central government, raising awareness of emerging policy issues.

The Transport East Partnership, comprising local authorities and other partners, will be investigating – at a sub-national level - how we support investment and better delivery models for rural/coastal/active transport. They have commissioned Jacobs to help develop this thinking through their Transport Strategy, with funding from the DfT, over the next 6 months.

Part of this work is to understand strategic outcomes we are trying to achieve in the East, and communicate priorities to government, e.g.:

- Supporting economic growth

- Reducing carbon emissions
- Improving access to services and improving social inclusion

...and then what could be improved at a national / sub-national level, to complement the work at local level.

Districts and other partners will be key to this and invited to input. As part of this, they would like to understand in more detail the symptoms that arise at a local level, and those solutions that will support wider outcomes, as well as the roles and responsibilities at different tiers of government to create change and deliver the outcomes.

Suffolk County Council: The local transport plan sets out Suffolk County Council's long-term transport strategy. The strategy for the rural areas within Suffolk is based around the following five themes.

- Better accessibility to employment, education, and services.
- Encouraging planning policies to reduce the need to travel
- Maintaining the transport network and improving its connectivity, resilience, and reliability
- Reducing the impact of transport on communities
- Support the county council's ambition of improving broadband access throughout Suffolk

Underpinning the strategy is the recognition of the need to strengthen communities so that they are better placed to address some local problems themselves and should be supported to take responsibility for tackling transport issues that directly affect them.

Importantly, together with the representatives of our local parishes, communities and businesses also represented on the Group, the Task Group has the potential to develop into a very effective forum for problem solving Transport issues in East Suffolk

4. Progress:

Transport Task Group formed, and first meeting held 26.10.20.

Task Group membership	
Carl Ashton	Suffolk County Council, Transport Policy & Development Manager
Luke Bennett	East Suffolk Council, Partnerships Manager
Norman Brooks	East Suffolk Council, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Transport
Nick Khan	East Suffolk Council, Strategic Director
Tom McGarry	EDF, Head of Stakeholder Engagement, Sizewell C Nuclear Development
Sarah Mortimer	Community Action Suffolk, Senior Manager Community Engagement
Alexander Nicoll	Suffolk County Council, Deputy Cabinet Member for Transport & Chair of the Local Government Association Public Transport Consortium
Russ Rainger	SALC, Vice Chairman of the Joint East Suffolk Area Forum
Andrew Summers	Transport East, Strategic Director
Tracy Vobe	Suffolk County Council, Head of Passenger Transport

The following sessions were held at the annual forum on the Wednesday, 4 November

Connecting Our Rural Communities	
This session will include a snapshot of the current rural transport set up in East Suffolk, together with current thinking on its future. Participants will get an overview of passenger data and journey purposes along with examples of the specific challenges to operating transport services in East Suffolk – and hear examples of new and innovative ideas to address them. The session will conclude with a discussion to build on the outcomes of recent stakeholder engagement undertaken by Suffolk County Council to help shape future rural transport services in Suffolk.	Facilitated by: Nick Khan, East Suffolk Council Cllr Alexander Nicoll, Chair of the Local Government Association Public Transport Consortium Andrew Summers, Transport East Susan Davey and Kirsty Marjoram, Suffolk County Council

Making Travel More Active and Sustainable	
This session will reflect current thinking about the modal shift underway towards active and sustainable travel alternatives. This will include an overview of the changing national policy landscape towards walking and cycling and a picture of what's happening or planned in East Suffolk as a result (with input from local stakeholders). The session will conclude with a discussion to help inform the local debate and how we could work through the Community Partnerships to support and add to what's planned.	Facilitated by: Nick Khan, East Suffolk Council Andrew Summers, Transport East Carl Ashton & Paul Horne, Suffolk County Council Anthony Taylor & Jason Beck, East Suffolk Council

5. Outcomes:

The initial outcomes from the Transport Task Group are:

Focus: The work programme and outcome proposals should reflect where the Community Partnership Board can add most value in the following areas:

- Active and Sustainable Travel
- Community transport solutions
- Rural Transport

Considerations:

- There is a lot of cross over between the various transport priorities so they will not be addressed in isolation to each other.
- There is already work planned or underway across Suffolk to address these priorities so the work of the Community Partnership Board will not be done in isolation to these other initiatives.

- Some of the right people to address the priorities already sit on the Board but the Task Group has co-opted other individuals where their key skills or knowledge are needed.
- There is data to support this work already available (Suffolk County Council / Transport East) and there is already a high level of understanding amongst key partners of how the system needs to respond.
- This is a large and complex topic, so a very focussed approach is needed to get results.
- Some issues can be addressed at a community level and in relatively short timescales, whilst others will require system level change and will take longer to achieve.

The Task Group concluded that a twin track approach is appropriate:

Short Term:

- i) Identify, develop and seed/match fund pilots and trial projects to test 'proof of concept' and assess their viability to be scaled up across the area.
- ii) Develop a 3-year transport work programme to be overseen by the Task Group and backed up by:
 - A programme manager
 - A programme delivery budget, focused on short-term deliverables as they become identified

Medium – Long term:

- i) Undertake a study of Transport and travel issues & gaps in East Suffolk to provide rigorous data and intelligence on which to base future work.
- ii) Work with strategic partners to redesign parts of the system, and collectively lobby to influence for change.
- iii) Other long-term aspirations as they are identified through the programme.

The Task Group has already made the following progress against its short-term goals:

- i) The Task Group is supporting Suffolk County Council in its excellent work to trial an innovative new EV Taxi bus service between Framlingham, Wickham Market and Campsea Ashe Station in January next Year. The first of the two outcome proposals associated with the report is seeking support and funding from the Board for this initiative.
- ii) The Task Group is pleased to have received the generous offer by EDF to provide a member of their staff to carry out the role of programme manager for the Task Group on a part time basis. The second of the two outcome proposals associated with this report is seeking support and funding from the Board to build an effective programme around this new post.

- iii) Via the two sessions at the Annual Forum, and input from a number of the Community Partnership Chairs, the Task Group has made progress to identify the local transport and travel issues that are important to our communities that can be the focus of support and 'quick win' solutions.

Longer term, examples of initiatives being supported are i) the substantial Quiet Lanes initiative now underway (funded by the former East Suffolk Partnership and Suffolk County Council) and The East Suffolk Cycling & Walking Strategy which is currently being consulted on by East Suffolk Council. We expect both initiatives to identify local priorities and projects that can be followed up on.

The Task Group has also made good progress in identifying the key factors that will form the scope of the Transport and Travel Study in the new year.

6. Conclusion and recommendations:

The task Group has made good progress by:

- i) Attracting the right people, who have agreed to continue to meet as the programme steering group should the Board wish them to.
- ii) Organising the right level of support to make sure it can deliver on behalf of the Board and the Community Partnerships (the associated programme proposal)
- iii) Identifying a key short-term outcome for the Board to support (The associated EV Taxi Bus proposal)

The Board is recommended to:

- i) Agree that the Task Group takes the role of the Transport Programme Steering Group to problem solve the transport priority on its behalf.
- ii) Considers its support for each of the two outcome proposals associated with this report:
 - i) KATCH EV Taxi bus trial £40k
 - ii) East Suffolk Travel and Transport improvement Programme £80k