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To: Environment, Highways & Waste – Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Subject: Sustainable Travel to School – Progress and initiatives

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report informs members of the progress made with regard to Kent's Sustainable Travel to School Strategy. It sets out progress made in tackling school run congestion and encouraging active lifestyles as well as plans for the future.

Since the inception of KHS's School Travel Planning Team in September 2004, Kent has enjoyed considerable success in achieving modal shift towards sustainable methods of travel to school. Over 94% (558 out of 592) of maintained schools now have School Travel Plans, and there has been an annual 1% shift away from the use of the car. In 2006/2007 35.6% of the children at Kent schools were travelling to school by car and in 2010 this figure has dropped to 31.4% according to school census data, making Kent a national leader in this area.

Introduction

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 placed a statutory duty on Local Authorities to promote sustainable travel and transport, and KCC received funding from government to deliver the requirements of that act. Assessments of the travel and transport needs of young people have been undertaken and an audit of the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure has been used to identify and promote sustainable travel choices to and between schools to develop the Kent Sustainable Travel to School Strategy. This report updates Members on progress made and sets out plans for further improvements with regard to School Travel Planning. Appendix 1 summarises feedback from customers and partners.

1. 558 School Travel Plans

School Travel Plans aim to effect positive change to more sustainable modes of travel to, from and between schools to improve the environment, safety and health of Kent's school children. As of March 2010, 94% of Kent schools now have travel plans and the focus of work is to ensure the robust management of the plans and the implementation of their actions monitored through an annual review form. This review then helps identify the need for Safer Routes to School schemes, and coordination with healthy schools and active travel partners.

iTRACE software helps with the ongoing tracking and monitoring of Travel Plans and to analyse and compare data within the plans.

2. 1% Mode Shift each year

Under National Indicator 198: *Children travelling to school – mode of transport usually used*, KCC aims to reduce the reliance on the car on the school journey. Data from Kent's school census returns has shown on average, a 1% annual decrease in car use (not including car sharers), and a positive trend towards the use of public transport. The numbers of children walking to school have increased, but there is still scope for encouraging pupils who live relatively close to their school to move away from travelling by car.

An analysis of school census data has identified about 40 schools which have the potential to deliver the greatest modal shift towards sustainable modes. Congestion hotspots, air quality and health indices will also be taken into account when selecting candidates for more intensive support. A toolkit is being developed to offer assistance to schools so that they can maximise their potential.

3. 22,000 Kent Freedom Passes

The Kent Freedom Pass scheme was rolled out countywide during 2009, and now provides free travel on most bus routes for all young people living in Kent and schooled in Kent in academic years 7-11 for an annual fee of £50. This innovative approach has seen a significant increase in bus passenger journeys by young people. There are currently over 22,000 passes issued and on average some 600,000 trips are made per school term month. It is intended to extend the scheme to pupils resident in Kent but schooled outside the county from April 2010.

4. 200 active travel schools

School Travel Plan Advisors work closely with health colleagues to ensure that all schools are engaged in the healthy schools initiative. A range of walking initiatives (Walk on Wednesday, The Walking Bug and the Walking Bus) has proved very effective in encouraging healthy, active travel to school. We have around 140 schools already signed up with WOW and The Walking Bug and 60 schools run walking buses. In 2009/2010 these schemes have estimated to have saved over 150,000 school run trips.

A Bike It officer has been in post for a few years in Ashford and Canterbury to promote safe cycling to school. This has also been extremely popular, and has increased the numbers of pupils cycling at most schools which have been engaged in the project. Research undertaken by Sustrans in January 2010 demonstrates that over the past two years, the levels of cycling in these Bike It schools have changed dramatically. Surveys carried out by the Bike It officer reveal that the proportion of pupils who:

- Never cycled to school decreased from 70% to 45%;
- Cycle everyday increased from 8.7% to 15.3%
- Regularly cycle increased from 20.1% to 33%

Pilot projects to provide national standard “Bikeability” cycle training have been carried out at 53 schools in Ashford and Canterbury (training 945 children) and 8 further courses are already booked for between September and October half term in the new school year.

5. 10 school parking projects

KHS has introduced an innovative scheme to highlight the dangers of parking on School Keep Clear markings, and has implemented it at 10 schools in Dartford, Gravesham and Thanet with the assistance of significant partners to encourage safer crossing opportunities outside schools.

During the initial pilot campaign in Gravesham, 27 parking fines were issued over the 3 week period outside 3 schools.

6. 3 schools involved in Individual Travel Planning

KHS’s individual travel planning service for young people in secondary schools “Journease” has expanded to other schools within the county. Approximately 50 Students at 3 schools have been trained to provide a travel advice service for their peers and staff at schools, and other expressions of interest have been received. A training guide is being produced, so that any staff in schools can train students themselves to provide the service.

This service will be particularly helpful for the 14-19 consortia, which are trying to ensure that there is a considered and well researched approach to finding sustainable transport solutions for older students travelling between establishments to benefit from vocational courses and diplomas.

7. 16,000 Back to School Travel Guides and Safer Travel on Public Transport

All parents/carers of pupils in year 6 have this year received a guidance booklet about encouraging independent travel to secondary school. Materials are also being developed for use in early years’ settings and primary schools. Sections regarding sustainable travel to school are included in the admissions booklets distributed to parents to help with their choices of schools.

The team has worked since January with a Kent Safe Schools Project officer to deliver guidance and advice to 6 secondary schools in Thanet as part of a pilot project run in conjunction with staff from Stagecoach.

8. Theatre in Education to 2,800 pupils

The MOMO Theatre company performed “The Man from the Council” show to 2,800 year 7 pupils at various secondary schools in the west of Kent at the end of February and beginning of March. The performances were very well received.

9. 23 Special Schools with Travel Plans

All except one SEN school in Kent now has a travel plan, with the emphasis on enabling young people with disabilities to access sustainable transport modes where possible, and the focus on their needs. All children are afforded equality of access to opportunities which have arisen from the 14-19 curriculum changes and Extended Schools initiative. Information on KCC's www.11-19travel.info site has been updated to improve accessibility for all users.

10. Partnerships

Effective working relationships exist with colleagues in the Children, Families and Education directorate of KCC (namely Extended Schools Development Managers, Local Children's Services Partnership Managers and those working on the 14-19 agenda). Road Safety Officers advise and provide joint support to schools on safety and security. Close liaison with KCC's Eco Schools Officer means that schools are keen to become Sustainable Schools. Healthy Schools Practitioners from local PCTs work in cooperation with the School Travel Plan Advisors to persuade schools that active travel is vital.

The KM Charity Team helps KHS to deliver walk to school initiatives and the Sustrans Bike It Officer works intensively with schools identified as suitable by School Travel Plans. Staff from Kent Police, KCC Community Wardens and Parking Management staff from District and Borough Councils play a huge part in assisting KHS to ensure a safer environment outside schools.

11. Sustaining School Travel Planning in Kent and extending the benefits

The work carried out by KHS with schools in the past six years has had a sustained and very positive effect on tackling school run congestion, improving the quality of the environment, and promoting healthier modes of travel. There has been significant capital investment of c£3.5m levered into Kent from government to support schools in the delivery of the objectives of their travel plans. Continued support for schools and targeted resources are needed in order to assist them in convincing the children and adults in their communities to adopt sustainable modes of travel.

KHS's School Travel Plan Advisors will now expand their brief to additionally include working with businesses to widen the benefits in encouraging sustainable travel to work. Links with Transportation and Development engineers will be strengthened and utilised to the full.

12. Conclusion

The Sustainable Travel to School Strategy is a statutory requirement, and will continue to be developed to build on Kent's successful School Travel Plan initiative. Subject to funding it is planned to support 36 schools per year to ensure that they achieve mode shift and their travel plans can be seen as good practice examples. This strategy aims to keep Kent at the forefront of tackling congestion and promoting active travel on the school run.

13. Recommendation

Members are requested to support Kent's Sustainable Travel to School initiatives in tackling congestion and promoting active lifestyles.

Background Documents: The following background documents have been used in the preparation of this report:

The Education and Inspections Act 2006

Climate change and schools: A carbon management strategy for the school sector

The Children's Plan 2007, incorporating Every Child Matters

Active travel strategy Feb 2010

On the state of public health: Annual report of the Chief Medical Officer 2009

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Appendix 1

Quotes from headteachers/ partners.

Headteachers comment on the benefits of walking to school:

“The children are enthusiastic about taking part in WoW and understand how walking contributes to a healthy lifestyle. Administering the scheme does not take up a lot of time and there has definitely been some reduction in the congestion outside the school on Wednesdays, especially at the end of the day” and “We run Walking Buses from 2 venues 5 days per week. This has eased congestion around the school and staff have noticed that children walking to school are more receptive and ready to learn”.

A senior police officer gives an opinion on the Zigzag parking project:

“Zig Zag is a big step forward in stopping dangerous and inconsiderate parking outside schools. It succeeds because it is driven by the children themselves who educated their parents about the danger. By personalising the problem it made parents aware that it could be their child at risk”

A deputy headteacher gives his views on the Theatre in Education performance:

“It was excellent – really well thought out and executed. The pupils really enjoyed it and learned from it. According to a straw poll, 23% of pupils walked to school before the performance. 48% stated that they would consider changing to this mode of travel afterwards. A significant number also said they would consider changing their clothing and behaviour so that they were safer”.