

Options for Active Travel - Proposals for Skipton Town Council

We have had four meetings of the cross-sectoral Active Travel Working Group (membership listed in Appendix I) and have undertaken a detailed community survey which resulted in 72 responses. At the last meeting, we agreed a list of prioritised options and categorised these by ease of implementation (e.g. likely cost and feasibility). We have also tried to clarify the role of the Town Council and the partners we would need to engage with if we are to implement some of these options.

The options that have been discussed are ranked below:

1. Improve bicycle storage

There was a high level of support for this suggestion, and the costs should not be excessive.

The suggested sites to consider were

- Skipton Railway Station
- Skipton Bus Station
- Skipton Building Society
- High Street / High Street Car Park

The responsibility for implementing and maintaining these bicycle storage facilities would be different for each site but there was a clear view that a package of storage sites would be much greater than one or two isolated sites.

There is also the question of what type of storage facility, but the working group felt these should be weatherproof, have secure bases to which bikes can be locked, ideally have CCTV oversight and be open to all bike users (not just train/bus travellers or restricted by employee status). They should ideally be free or a minimum charge for usage. It was also proposed that cycle storage should be linked to secure left luggage facilities so that cycle gear and other personal possessions could be stored at the same facility as the bicycle storage (an important consideration for cycling visitors to Skipton).

The Town Council's role would be to engage / lobby partners who could provide bicycle storage facilities. We could also coordinate a bid for active travel funding, possibly from as early as Autumn 2025 (via the YNY Mayor's Active Travel Fund).

Partners needed for this are likely to include the owners of the sites listed above, presumably British Rail for the railway station, possibly Transdev for the bus station (or NY Council if we used the adjacent car park), Skipton Building Society for their main office, and NY Council for the High Street car park.

2. Develop local walking and cycle routes

This proposal had high levels of public support and costs should be reasonable. We should be able to build on the Skipton LCWIP (Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan) but with a greater emphasis on the town centre. There are specific concerns about pedestrian access for Sandylands and between the Railway Station and the Bus Station and then the Town Centre. Locally, Sandylands is an important destination for Skipton schools without

playing fields whose classes access the site on foot for organised games sessions and physical activity.

The Town Council has responded recently to the Cycling Network Development consultation, highlighting schemes which would assist in taking forward the LCWIP (comments in Appendix II). These include improving cycle routes, for example, along Broughton Road, Belmont Street, Carleton Street, Gas Street as well as main through routes (A6131, A 6069 and A 629).

However, our survey responses also highlighted two related challenges for this priority. One challenge is managing the potential conflict between walkers, cyclists and other wheeling travellers. The other challenge is creating safe walking and cycling spaces alongside busy roads when pavements are narrow, and roads have large vehicles potentially travelling at 30 mph in both directions.

Therefore, there remains a question as to whether town centre walking and cycling routes can be further developed without other measures such as speed restrictions, a comprehensive one-way system or significant area wide traffic calming.

The main partners needed for developing town centre walking and cycling routes are the LCWIP owners - NY Council and the possibly North Yorkshire and York Combined Authority. The Canal and River Trust may be needed if there is any scope to further develop towpath routes.

The role of the Town Council is to advocate for improved walking and cycling routes and to try to improve both road safety (see below) and personal safety for pedestrians and cyclists and to prompt North Yorkshire Council to consider these schemes should future funding opportunities become available.

3. Widespread 20 mph restrictions.

There was very strong support for this with only small numbers of survey respondents opposing it. The general message received seemed to be for as much of the town's roads to be restricted to 20 mph as possible, but especially those with schools and / or narrow pavements. Some survey respondents were very impressed with the Ilkley 20 mph restrictions.

We felt that the Town Council should request North Yorkshire Council and North Yorkshire Police to action 20 MPH limits throughout Skipton Town Centre, given the difficulties in promoting walking and cycling routes with the current high levels of both real and perceived road danger.

We also felt it would be useful to ask North Yorkshire Council for a map showing all schools within Skipton and the current speed limits on surrounding roads. Apart from the town centre, because of concerns for safe routes to school, there was strong support for 20 MPH schemes on roads close to Aireville Park (e.g. Gargrave Road and Broughton Road).

The main partners needed are NY Council, NY Police and the YNY combined authority.

4. Comprehensive one-way system, wider pavements, more pedestrian crossing points, more pedestrian refuges and traffic calming measures.

We have put these all together because it is difficult to think how pavements could be widened and pedestrian crossing improved on Newmarket Street, Swadford / Belmont Street, Craven / Cavendish Street without sacrificing a vehicle lane. A number of options for a one-way system were mooted but these would clearly need more work on feasibility.

This option could be relatively expensive depending on the extent of the scheme and the options for engineering works considered to be required and/or feasible.

The main partners for these measures would be NY Council and possibly the combined authority. At this stage Skipton Town Council should ask NY Council to explore options for funding of a feasibility study into developing a pedestrian and cycle friendly town centre to include a comprehensive one-way system in Skipton, pedestrianised streets, wider pavements, dedicated cycle routes (or bus/cycle lanes), regular pedestrian crossing points, more pedestrian refuges, and other traffic calming measures.

5. Promoting safe active travel to school

There was very strong support for this in the survey but an amazing variety of suggestions on how it could be developed. Many of these suggestions feature in other options e.g. speed limits, cycle ways, wider pavements, traffic restrictions (especially High Street and adjacent streets) and more pedestrianised streets.

However, there were also specific suggestions on walking buses and provision of parental parking at some distance from the school (alongside banning parental drop offs outside or adjacent to the school). There were also several suggestions on good lighting for walking routes, especially off-road routes.

It has been noted that recent national guidance (from Department of Transport and Active Travel England), suggests promoting schemes that restrict traffic outside schools during pick-up and drop-off times.

The Town Council's role is mainly of advocacy and facilitation and the key partners for this are schools, parents associations and NY Council.

6. Car sharing scheme for Skipton

There was quite a good level of support for a car sharing scheme with most survey respondents rating it either a good idea or a fair idea. One third of survey respondents said that they would use a car sharing scheme if one was available. Further work on the feasibility of a car sharing scheme would be justified based on the feedback so far.

There are a number of issues that would need to be addressed. Who would operate such a scheme, where would share cars be parked and, if electric vehicles were used, where would the charging points be located. We felt that the time was right for a feasibility study,

engaging local employers and potential shared vehicle users to assess opportunities for funding for vehicle purchases, scheme management and installation of charging points for Electric Vehicles.

Partners required to explore this further would be a lead organisation (which might be the Town Council) and a potential car share developer/operator. The Active Travel Working Group suggested that, in the first instance, we engage with CoMoUK which is a national charity that supports vehicle sharing schemes.

7. Bike sharing scheme

Although it appears from the summary results that this proposal had a lot of support, the actual suggestions in the survey responses are mainly about other measures to promote cycling in general rather than a specific bike sharing scheme.

These included better bicycle storage, dedicated cycling routes, reducing traffic speeds, and making Skipton a cycle-friendly town. There were a number of comments about separating bicycling and pedestrian routes and some concerns about e-bikes (speedy and silent?); the latter could also apply to other wheeled travel such as two wheeled scooters and battery operated mobility scooters.

The only partners proposed were potential bike hire companies (not clear if this was local or national). However, CoMoUK will also support bike and scooter sharing schemes.

8. Park and Ride schemes for Skipton

There was moderate support for such schemes but also some queries on whether a park and ride scheme was feasible or necessary. The sites suggested included Gateway House (the Computershare building), the Auction Mart, Snaygill Industrial site, Wyvern Road (as part of the new Lidl development).

Developing a park and ride scheme would be an ambitious commitment and would need a feasibility study first. It is not clear how much annual subsidy might be required for a park and ride scheme or whether it could ever be self-financing. If traffic restrictions were introduced as part of the other options to promote active travel, these would probably increase the viability of a Park and Ride scheme.

It was suggested by the cross-sectoral Working Group that a park and ride scheme could be linked to a pilot of increased rural buses. This might work best if there were new or more frequent rural bus routes, which then stopped at a park and ride site on the edge of Skipton to pick up car passengers for the route into the town centre.

As well as the potential site owners, we would need partnership from a bus company and probably investment from either NY Council or the NYY Combined Authority.

Membership of the Active Travel Working Group

Skipton Town Councillors: Stephen Morton, Matt Pickard, Brian McDaid, Chris Harbron

Skipton Building Society: Holly Bradley

Skipton Bid: Neil Roe

North Yorkshire Council Officers: Alexander Kay, Helen Williams

York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority: Graham North

Climate Action Skipton: Mark Hopley

Yorkshire Dales National Park: Robert Ashford

Cycling Network Development – Comments From Skipton Town Council

Background

In 2024, Skipton Town Council received support from North Yorkshire Council, through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, towards a sustainable travel audit for Skipton and the surrounding area. After exploring several options, we elected to use this on a workshop for key stakeholders to try and improve access to active travel options. Following the success of this workshop, which resulted in several clear recommendations, we established a time limited Active Travel Working Group.

We have used the outputs from this working group as well as comments from other local councillors and partners to inform this response to consultation on the Cycling Network Development for Skipton. We believe they are consistent with the current Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

Skipton Town Council Response

Skipton Town Council would very much support the development of cycling routes on several of the access routes leading into the town centre, especially the A6069 (Belmont Street and Broughton Road) proposals and the Carleton Street and Gas Street proposal. It appears that some of these had previously been recommended under the Transforming Cities Fund proposals but were not funded. Each if these routes would help improve safe access from the railway station to the town centre.

The proposals relating to the A6131 / Skipton Road would also improve safe cycle access to the town centre as would the A629 Keighley Road proposal (we note that the latter is listed as high cost and a long-term aspiration but the long-term benefits would be considerable).

The Manville Lane proposal fits with some of the early suggestions that came up at our initial active travel workshop. A Manville Lane cycleway would assist links between the railway station and Craven College as well as several secondary schools. This scheme would need to address personal security and lighting concerns.

Black Lane is a key link between the railway and bus stations and is heavily used by pedestrians. We feel it would need to be widened considerably if was also to be used as a cycleway as well as a footpath. We are not sure how feasible this is as it is constrained by the railway on one side and by Morrisons store on the other; if it is technically possible to widen it, it may be very expensive.

There are similar issues relating to improvements for Gallows bridge if it were to provide improved routes for not just cyclists but walkers, wheelchair users and mobility scooters. Another key route on which to raise cycling levels and where it should be possible is Embsay-Skipton.

Although these proposals are all listed under the Cycling Network Development umbrella, Skipton Town Council would also emphasise that all these routes should include adequate provision to improve pedestrian access to the town centre.

Importantly, this may mean a need for separate cycling and pedestrian space within the same route and for some schemes might, in turn, impact on space for motorised traffic (including bus routes). Many of these schemes would be easier to implement if there were a town centre wide speed restriction of 20MPH (making it easier for cyclists to use road lanes safely) and/or a comprehensive one-way system (reducing the need for double vehicle lanes on many of the narrow streets).

Outside the town centre, we also need a 20MPH limit on the route to Stirton and 30MPH limits on the routes to Embsay and Carleton. These would greatly increase safe cycle accessibility to Skipton as would improved secure cycle storage within the town centre; reducing traffic speeds and improving cycle storage should be relatively cheap, easy and effective to implement.