

On behalf of the Cycling Tynedale Committee
15 Aug 2014

Dear Simon

I write to you as Chair of Cycling Tynedale with our comments on the Community Rail Development Strategy.

We are broadly supportive but would like to see added to the key aspirations list, facilitating cycling as mode of transport for part of the journey to work and also as a leisure activity.

There are several areas of activity where this can have an important contribution to, in particular economy, public health and the green agenda.

Firstly, anything which can promote the local economy should be supported. It is widely recognised that cycling as a leisure activity is an untapped asset Northumberland. There is potential to bring cyclist (& walking) visitors from Newcastle and adjacent conurbations, as well as further afield.

Examples would include taking the train along the Tyne Valley and cycling back to the conurbations along Hadrian's cycleway. Or incorporating a short loop with a visit to two neighbouring stations, for taking the train to Corbridge, Riding Mill, Hexham and walking or cycling to the next station, returning by walking, cycling or rail. Places such as Corbridge are very attractive day trip destinations. If these were linked to a leisure route to Hexham this would boost retail and tourism in Hexham, generally make a more substantial day out and increase the pull of this for potential visitors.

The stations are also fantastic start points for longer cycles heading north into Northumberland or south into the North Pennines. A current problem is that the East-West corridor along the Tyne Valley is not cycle friendly, acting as a barrier to this.

Practical measures which could be taken include:

- making the stations explicit jumping off points for cycling with modern safe cycle storage, e.g. lockable cycle boxes, CCTV by cycle racks, a water tap for cyclist to refill bottles, bike hire provision [which could be cost effectively achieved using automated hire techniques], encouragement of bike maintenance support enterprises being available at key stations (e.g. Hexham during peak commuting times, other stations at weekends, signposting to the closest bike shop)

- review of station land to see if cycle routes fanning out from or passing through the stations could be better linked into current or future possible cycle networks with different access routes, cycle path demarcation etc
- selection of rolling stock which MORE RELIABLY facilitates the transport of bikes, particularly at weekends
- promotional, motivational and supportive signposting at stations for walking and cycling
- liaising with other bodies in development of strategic plans beyond the boundary of the station, for example nascent Northumberland County Council bodies, the northern Strategic Clinical Network public health plans
- liaising with groups such as www.fuse.ac.uk and in particular Prof Mike Trennell to incorporate their translational knowledge regarding behaviour change, in particular in relation to physical activity

You should be also aware of major policy developments in the North East regarding public health, such as incorporating 'obesogenic' review of all current and future planned infrastructure changes and a variety of mechanisms to lead to a step change in activity levels. It is therefore important that current planning thoughts are not based on the way people do things now, but anticipate major shifts in demand for safe and supportive 'corridors' of physical activity.

Yours sincerely



Paul Goldsmith
Chair of Cycling Tyndale