

Nigel Blackler, Director – Infrastructure, Cornwall Council

Geoff Brown, Portfolio holder for Transport, Cornwall Council

4<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Dear Nigel Blackler and Geoff Brown

**Proposal for active transport measures in Truro to address the impact of COVID – 19**

As is the case in other parts of the country and internationally we are currently seeing many more people walking and cycling in and around Truro. In particular, many families with young children are out on their bikes for their daily exercise, confident to cycle on near traffic free streets.

We are also aware that both surgeries at Truro Health Park have acquired e-bikes so that GPs can carry out their home visits safely enabling easier physical distancing.

Truro Cycling Campaign is keen to ensure that families, our key workers and other commuters can continue to commute or exercise by bike safely as they adhere to the 2 m social distancing requirements, both during the lockdown and afterwards. It is not yet clear what the Government's approach will be to easing the restrictions but the accepted view is that social distancing will play a big part for many months to come. It is also likely that people will continue to be nervous about using public transport, even if separation measures are applied on buses and trains. As you are aware Truro suffers from high levels of congestion particularly from commuters travelling into Truro along the A390 corridor. The levels of air pollution which have been recorded along this corridor (there are 3 hotspots where levels have consistently been well over the national limit for Nitrogen Dioxide) will have likely plummeted recently in line with other areas. However, the worry is that as more people choose to drive into Truro rather than use the Park and Ride facility this congestion could increase substantially.

It is important then that we act quickly to put in place temporary measures to provide safe space for walking and cycling. This will encourage those already cycling to continue rather than thinking that they need to get back in their cars to travel safely for exercise and work

Cycling UK has produced a [short guide for Local Authorities](#) on implementing Active Travel measures, quickly, safely and affordably, in response to the coronavirus. This guide shows that measures are being adopted by Councils across the UK as well as internationally.

Truro Cycling Campaign is therefore asking you to look as soon as possible at measures that can be introduced in Truro specifically (although we also encourage this approach throughout the County). From our local knowledge we set out below some suggestions for measures. All the measures could be introduced on a temporary basis - to meet the immediate needs of getting the city to function while meeting social distancing requirements over the summer period. They could then be reviewed later in the summer as public health requirements change and to check how the city centre is functioning.

## **1 Making central Truro traffic free**

We believe there is a good case for dedicating the central area of Truro as traffic free. In Boscawen street where people are often queuing to shop at the Co-op and Wilko, pedestrians are trying to pass each other safely on the pavement, whilst there's a large area of unused road space that could temporarily be made available for people travelling on foot or cycling. The situation is currently exacerbated by areas cordoned off due to road works. Similarly in Kenwyn Street where the road and pavements are particularly narrow people are often queuing on both sides to collect shopping from Archie Browns. People walking into the road to pass safely are then having to compete with cars driving up Kenwyn Street. This situation will only continue and get worse as more shops start to open during easing of restrictions. The exact area for restricting traffic would need to be considered but our initial thoughts are that this could cover the area contained within a circuit of St Clement Street, St Austell Street, Morlaix Avenue, Fairmantle Street, Charles Street, City Road, Dominic Street, Ferris Town, Frances Street, Edward Street, and Union Street, with the circuit roads remaining open to traffic. Access would remain open for buses, disabled drivers, emergency vehicles and deliveries, perhaps with the latter restricted to set hours in the morning and evening. For these vehicles needing to drive into the traffic free area a speed limit of 10mph could be applied. Consideration could be given in the medium to longer term to limiting bus drop offs to the bus station which could be accessed from Morlaix Avenue along Quay Street and Green Street.

We appreciate that there will be concerns about the effect on businesses of removing traffic from the centre of Truro. However recent studies have shown the [benefits of cycling to local economies](#) and we need to emphasise these to help allay such fears. In Lithuania there are [plans to turn the capital city Vilnius into a 'vast open air café'](#) to help social distancing as lockdown measures are gradually lifted and to help revive local businesses. Allowing something similar in Truro centre as part of a traffic free area could have economic benefits especially as the summer approaches. Traffic free city centre streets could create space for outside table and chairs for cafes and restaurants. This will enable them to meet social distancing requirements, keep their businesses viable - and could actually be a positive improvement if it creates a city centre for leisure.

Within this traffic free area roads which are currently one way for traffic could be made bidirectional for cycling to make it easier and more convenient to navigate around the town. The bus lane in Frances Street should be opened up to cyclists. A code could be highlighted and publicized which ensures courteous behaviour between cyclists and pedestrians. Key cycle parking areas could be identified and improved eg the Leats with cyclists being encouraged to park in these areas and walk into the shopping area to help avoid conflict between cyclists and pedestrians. Generally more cycle parking would need to be provided within the town to cope with increased demand.

## **2 A city wide 20mph limit**

Introducing a 20mph speed limit throughout the city could encourage some people to cycle on the roads who would otherwise not do so. In addition such a measure would send a clear signal to those few motorists who are currently taking advantage of emptier roads to drive above the speed limit.

Nationally a group of medical experts has called for a national speed limit of 20mph in urban built up areas as part of a series of measures to lower the baseline load on the NHS during the coronavirus outbreak. Their '[Lower the Baseline](#)' campaign refers to traffic collisions as one of the biggest causes for hospital admissions.

We suggest a 20 mph city wide speed limit could extend to the Truro city limits:

- In the north: up to the top of Tregolls Road to Buckshead roundabout
- In the north/west: up to the Knights Hill junction on Kenwyn Hill
- In the south and west: up to the A390 and extending along the A390 from Arch Hill roundabout to the Truro college roundabout or beyond
- In the east: Morlaix avenue from Tesco roundabout to Tregolls Road roundabout and up St Clements Hill to beyond Penair school

### **3 Creating cycle lanes on existing carriageway – Tregolls Road, Trefalgar roundabout, Morlaix Avenue, and Newham Road**

The dual carriageway along Morlaix Avenue and Tregolls Road provides a good opportunity to make safe space for cycling along key desire lines.

#### **3.1 Tregolls Road Trevithick Road junction to Trafalgar Roundabout**

This route would enable many people to cycle safely from the large residential areas on the west side of Tregolls Road into the town centre. The inside eastbound lane of Tregolls Road from the Trevithick Road junction could be cordoned off for bi-directional cycling with pedestrians continuing to use the existing footway. See how something similar has been done in [Leicester](#)

A possible crossing from the east side at Chellew Road could also be investigated to allow safe cycling from residential areas in the east.

The Trafalgar Roundabout is a key junction, not only for motor traffic but also people wanting to walk or cycle - from residential areas to the east and north - to Boscawen Park along Malpas Road, and to the city centre. The roundabout has been designed for traffic speed with several lanes for motor traffic, rather than for safety. Space could be created for safer cycling and walking by cordoning off the outer lane, and traffic light phasing adjusted to ensure safe crossing of each arm. Linked to a 20mph limit for the city, this could be introduced on a trial basis for the summer months. [This video](#) shows the proposed Dutch style roundabout in Cambridge. Such roundabouts are not signalised but perhaps an adaptation of this could be created at the Trefalgar roundabout.

#### **3.2 Safe access to and along Malpas Road**

During the coronavirus restrictions a large number of people have been cycling along Malpas Road to Boscawen Park and beyond to Malpas, including many families. This is a key, flat, route serving the important recreational area of Boscawen Park and has been identified as such by Truro Cycling Campaign in consultation events at Truro Day and the Green Truro festival. It is also an important route in the Truro Loops project. Safe access to this area could be provided by adapting the existing Roundabout as described above.

Due to very narrow sections on much of Malpas Road on carriageway improvements for cycling are difficult. We therefore recommend a 20mph limit to ensure less confident cyclists will continue to use this route when traffic volumes increase.

#### **3.3 Morlaix Avenue to Newham Road**

There is a project to improve the old railway line (Newham trail) under the Truro Loops scheme, and work could start as soon as summer this year. However, measures are still needed to connect to the city centre to provide safe cycling and walking for all ages. A mixture of measures could achieve a continuous safe route along the eastern side of Newham Road. In some parts the pavement is wide

enough but there should be cycle/pedestrian priority crossings, while in other parts the pavement is narrow but the carriageway could be cordoned off to create safe space.

Access to Newham Road could be achieved by cordoning off the inner lane of the westbound Morlaix Avenue for cycling up to the Tesco roundabout using the Tesco filter lane. Cyclists could give way to vehicles accessing Tesco or vice versa.

A temporary at grade crossing of Morlaix Avenue could be considered to give cyclists and pedestrians access back to the city centre. Space in the underpass at Lemon Quay could become restricted with more people using it.

#### **4 Other safety measures - Access from Hendra Road/St Georges Road to and from the town centre along the riverside paths**

Hendra to the city centre is a key desire line for residents in the west of Truro as well as for cross city trips to the Coosebean cycle path for onward trips along the A390 shared path, eg. to the hospital, Richard Lander school, college and Threemilestone.

Ideally improvements are needed along St Georges Road and at the junctions of St George's Road/ Ferris Town and Frances Street/Edward Street to enable people to cycle safely from Hendra into Truro along River Street and into Victoria Square where additional cycle parking would be needed.

However, it is suggested in the short term that the path along the river Kenwyn from the bottom of Hendra Road to the Leats is explicitly opened up for cycling. Safe crossings could be installed at Edward Street and Castle street (although it has been suggested earlier that the latter road would be part of the traffic free area) through a shared use zebra crossing. Due to the narrowness of the openings onto Edward street cyclists may well need to dismount to give priority to pedestrians.

At the Hendra Road/St George's Road junction the pavement area could be built out using barriers and planters to allow pedestrians and cyclists to cross more safely from the riverside path onto St Georges road

#### **5 Quiet lanes – Idless Road**

Quiet lanes offer a particular opportunity for exercise where they are easy to access without a car from the city centre. Idless road is a good example. This is normally a busy road as it provides access to Idless woods. The car park at the woods is currently closed and this has made a marked difference to the amount of traffic on the road with many people and families feeling safe to cycle or walk along this picturesque lane. We propose that a 20pmh speed limit is introduced to encourage people to continue cycling and walking. We also suggest that some of the car parking area at the woods could be given over to cycle parking to encourage more people to cycle rather than drive there.

#### **6 Encouraging cycling from Langarth Park and Ride**

As people may still be nervous about travelling on public transport the digital advertising boards on the approach to the P&R could be used to advertise the option of 'Park and Cycle' using the A390 shared use path.

## **7 Transforming residential streets – Daniel Street**

The recent reduction in traffic flows has highlighted to residents in Daniel Street how more pleasant their street could be. Daniel Street is long and narrow with terraced houses fronting directly onto pavements, accentuating traffic noise particularly from fast moving cars using the street as a cut through to the city centre. This makes for a noisy and unpleasant environment. Residents are keen to see a 20mph speed limit introduced with the street made one way for cars (access from Falmouth Road) with the Truro City bus service still using the street. Consideration could also be given to making Daniel street traffic free except for buses.

## **8 Support for measures**

Truro Cycling Campaign has gathered data through public engagement at Truro Day and Green Truro events. These show a latent demand for better cycling provision and indicate that measures taken by the Council will receive a large amount of support. At Green Truro 2019, 34 people who attended the stall said they would cycle more if there were lower speeds on roads, this was a close third after 39 who said they would cycle more if there were fewer cars and 78 who said they would cycle more if there were separate cycle lanes on main routes.

## **9 Conclusion**

We have seen through national and local Government response to the Coronavirus pandemic that action can be taken quickly if the political will is there. The measures set out in this email are constructive suggestions of the type of measures we think are acceptable and achievable. We appreciate that Council officers will have many demands on their time at the moment. We therefore want to offer our help, support and local knowledge to help implement some or all of the measures suggested. The Council has already shown its commitment to good provision for cycling, particularly through the high standards being designed into the Northern Access Road and Langarth masterplan generally and will hopefully welcome our ideas.

Truro Cycling Campaign believes that the type of measures we are proposing can help deal with the social distancing requirements as they continue into the medium term. Such measures will also assist the Council in delivering its climate emergency action plan by reducing carbon emissions from transport (one of the biggest emitters locally and nationally). They will help promote behaviour change paving the way for permanent features which will create a more people centred city, reduce congestion and air pollution and promote healthy lifestyles.

As this issue is pressing we look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Best wishes

Sarah Wetherill

Convener, Truro Cycling Campaign

Copied to:

Julian German, Leader, Cornwall Council; Loic Rich, ward member Tregolls; Rob Nolan, ward member Redannick; Bert Biscoe, ward member Boscawen; David Harris, ward member Trehaverne; Kate Kenally, Chief Executive, Cornwall Council; Vicki Frazer, Head of transport planning and strategy; Simon Murray, Sustrans Network Development Manager  
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