

Designing for movement: Transport and regeneration in historic towns

Durham 30 April - 1 May 2008

Copies of the power point presentations are available to download from the Members' area of www.ehtf.org.uk, alternatively you can purchase them on cd for £10.

Wednesday 30 April

A **Blue Badge tour**, on Wednesday afternoon, offered early arrivals an overview of the City and its history. This was followed by dinner at **Oldfields**, at which **Alan Young, Senior Technical Director, WSP**, who had been closely involved with the Department for Transport's Manual for Streets, launched the **EHTF Manual for Historic Streets**. After the meal, restaurant proprietor, **Bill Oldfield**, shared his two passions: for historic buildings - the restaurant was the former Durham Gas Company head quarters and show-room - and for locally sourced food.

Thursday 1 May

Brian Human, Chair, EHTF introduced the conference and gave the background to the Forum's work on the topic and the challenges and opportunities which must be embraced.

He introduced the keynote presentation 'Traffic in historic towns: challenges and opportunities' by **Malcolm Buchanan, Managing Director of Colin Buchanan** who began by saying that: "The car has created travel markets which only it can serve we need a competitive form of public transport which can provide a genuine alternative to the car."

He said that historic towns had always lead the way in transport innovation; members of the Forum had pioneered pedestrianisation, park and ride, high frequency mini buses, road charging, cycle bridges and a guided bus-way. There were also lessons to be learned, in particular with regard to a different (more sedate) approach to cycling, from China and Holland, with more cycle lanes and the use of electric bikes. He asked "What more can we do with the bus?" which had hardly changed over decades. He explored the potential of PRT systems, the expansion of which might depend on outcomes of the model to be trialed by BAA at T5 later this year.



"There are lessons to be learned in a different (more sedate) approach to cycling"



Personal Rapid Transit systems are being trialed by BAA later this year

Ian Poole (EHTF Executive and Bury St Edmunds) introduced **EHTF's Manual for Historic Streets** and its evolution from the Forum's work on traffic management and the public realm and in support of the DfT guidance. He suggested that we must start with a definition of streets and spaces - what they are for and what makes a space a 'place'. These are many and various and not just about the car. Lord Foster said that "The essence of the city is the connection provided by the public space." And CABE suggests the critical components are: character, continuity and enclosure, ease of movement, legibility, adaptability and diversity. So why the need for this guidance? Whilst historic buildings may have some protection, the street pattern, which is such a fundamental part of historic towns, does not. The increasing privatisation of public space and overuse of signs and lines, with little or no coordination of management, all threaten the streets of historic towns.

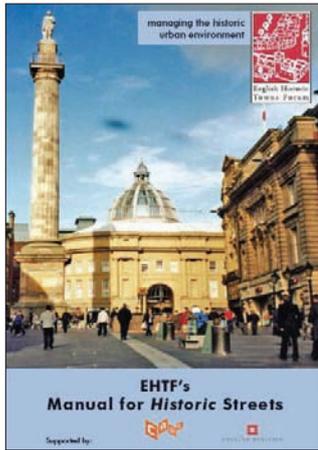
The Why? and How? are explored in some depth in the new document, with input from experts and practitioners on the role of streets, strategic and partnership working, the economic benefits of investment, the question of 'risk' and examples of good practice on a wide range of topics including: signage, parking, local distinctiveness, lighting, public art and surfaces. Extensively illustrated, the document ends with twenty two principles which the Forum proposes to underpin good practice. Ian emphasised the need for coordination and the Forum's belief that a single 'champion' for the streets should be appointed to take an overview of the 'place'. Ian thanked English Heritage and CABE and all contributors for their support for this document and said that although this and other publications were taking the agenda forward there was still a long way to go, and EHTF would continue to work with partners to continue the progress.



Places where people walk, drive, cycle, are pushed or carried



"Whilst historic buildings may have some protection, the street pattern, which is such a fundamental part of historic towns, does not"



After a break for coffee, delegates heard about **local transport strategies** from a number of speakers:

The Transport Innovation Fund in Cambridge – road pricing solution for an historic city – Graham Hughes, Director of Sustainable Infrastructure, Cambridgeshire County Council: Graham explained the pressures created by the growth agenda. Whilst Cambridge has some of the most successful traffic management strategies in the country, including park and ride, bus use and cycling, it is still congested and the growth agenda means that there are increasing challenges and 'doing nothing is not an option'. Change is essential to preserve the economy and character of the City. A long term transport strategy, looking towards 2021, which included 'carrot and stick' measures, was complemented by the offer of the Transport Innovation Fund, which included funding for studies. A package of measures, which included congestion charging, has been developed. The road charging proposal should be effective, and cheap and simple to run. The benefits of these measures are expected to include: reduced pollution, reduced congestion, increased accessibility, greater safety, social integration and protection of the environment. Next steps will depend on the consultation response which will be known the week commencing 6 May and then the DfT response to the bid.



"Cambridge has some of the most successful traffic management strategies in the country including park and ride, bus use and cycling"

Problems with pricing – why Shrewsbury needs a different solution – Rob Surl, Technical Director, Mouchel (formerly Shropshire County Council): Rob explained the 'Integrated Transport Plan' for Shrewsbury which had guided work over almost 20 years and which aimed to:

- improve accessibility in ways that do not increase dependence on the private car
- make the town safe and attractive in ways that respect and enhance its historic character.

This included three successful park & ride sites; car parking using simple principles, a hierarchy of charges and decriminalisation of parking; investment in public transport, with capital investment in bus stops, real time information and new buses; an extensive cycle network; the Historic Core Zone project, which included narrowing of the carriageways and courtesy crossings and resulted in reduced traffic speeds and fewer accidents; the North West Relief Road which has not been implemented for lack of funding and which might have been brought forward as part of the Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) project.

The TIF study was undertaken and explored, as the core of the scheme, flexible road user charging, as (similar to Durham's location) the river loop in which Shrewsbury is located forms a natural cordon. The NW Relief Road and road space reallocation was also key to the scheme. However, following a lukewarm response to the public engagement exercise, the question remained – 'Can we make it work?' This would depend on four elements: the traffic and environment impacts; the economics (cost/benefits); cash flow and public and political acceptance.

A package which delivered all four was not found. Cash flow was, Rob said, "a disaster!" The scheme was no longer the simple one envisaged, and although benefits were identified the scheme was not economically sound. Economies of scale and the dis-economy of collection of the charge were problematic, however, the Local Authority is keen to build the Relief Road and, as part of this scheme, to work with the Environment Agency on flood risk management. Town centre enhancements are ongoing as part of Phase 3, and despite a great deal of temporary disruption to the town centre, including experimental road closures, Rob was relatively optimistic about the acceptance by the public in the long run.



Shrewsbury needs different solutions including the reallocation of road space.

The Durham case study: Durham City Vision – Harvey Dowdy, Regeneration Manager, Durham 2020 Vision

This initiative was set up in the light of the recognition of relatively poor economic performance and the Masterplan is intended as a blue print for the City. Harvey explained that the partners included core local authority representation as well as the Cathedral and University, which had significant land holdings and brought over 4,000 people to the City. “We do not do” she emphasised “flowerbeds and fairy lights!” It is a spatial plan with the focus on placemaking – not just the physical elements – with all three sectors involved. There are explicit themes and strategies from which the work programme has evolved. There is also a projects and events strategy which will include a £.25m ‘big event’, together with learning and skills and Light & Darkness strategies. These will form a framework for developers.

Delivery across a diverse Cityscape is complex but aims to change Durham from a ‘2 hour destination to a 2 day destination’ by presenting all the assets together.

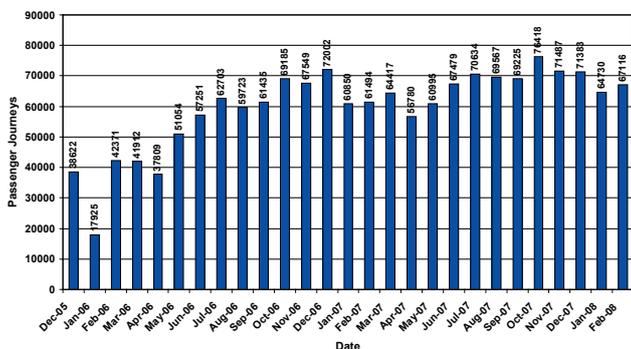


The Peninsula: Area Specific

Transport developments in Durham City – Roger Elphick, Acting Corporate Director – Environment , Durham County Council

Roger explained that the 1997 travel study had been almost completely implemented and that the demand management strategy was revenue neutral. He detailed the aims of the parking strategy and the park and ride schemes. Patronage had risen steadily and short stay parking capacity in the City centre had increased. He explained the background to the congestion charging scheme- the first in the UK – and its operational details. One of the results of the scheme had been the resolution of congestion and conflict in Saddler Street, with improvements to the environment, access and road safety.

The Transport Innovation Fund objectives matched those of Durham and offer the opportunity for a further package of travel and transportation improvements to deal with future congestion and to ensure the future vitality and viability of the City. The strengths of the County Council’s bid include its proven record for innovation and delivery, willingness to share good practice and its commitment – through strong political support and an existing partnership structure.



Economic development and tourism issues – Martin Boulton, Tourism Manager, Durham City Council

All of the attractions which draw visitors to Durham are in one place, which, said Martin, can create a dilemma. What is required is not greater numbers of visitors but a higher spend per visitor. An economic impact assessment (STEAM 2006) showed the value of tourism at £146m, with 3.7m visitors, and small increases in tourist days (3%) and FTE jobs supported (5%). With very few bedspaces (4000 of the 4,617 are in the Colleges) and almost all visitors heading for the Cathedral and Castle, capacity is a problem. There is therefore a project – Heart of the City – to improve economic development and expand the visitor ‘offer’ to include the Prince Bishop shopping centre, the Millennium project (the Gala Theatre, Library and Information Centre) Highgate (housing for revenue) and Walkergate (bars and restaurants). In addition, to enhance the visitor experience, plans are underway for improvements to the railway station, a new Radisson Hotel, the Necklace Park, Riverbank Gardens and improved signage – to encourage exploration – and lighting – to extend the day and seasons – together with additional events to encourage longer stays.



Durham Castle

Local urban and rural regeneration projects – Rod Lugg, Head of Environment and Planning, Durham City Council

Rod described the *People, Places, Futures* project, the aim of which is to work with local people to develop ideas to create more economically sustainable town and village centres for the future. This is a key component, he said, in achieving the County’s vision – ‘making a difference where you live’. The project is guided by national, regional and local policies with major funding from the County Council. Initial funding was increased to extend the programme to include Durham City centre, smaller towns and villages and neighbourhood schemes. These include the new Brancepeth Homezone, a previously un-adopted road which was improved and enhanced with the support of residents. At Barnard Castle priorities for enhancement were identified, with a partnership approach and supporting the tourism potential. Other projects included Galgate; The Scar; Newgate Street; Bishop Auckland – with very distinctive street furniture; Killerby House; Front Street in Chester-le-Street; Saddler Street, North Road and Neville Street in Durham. Work in Market Place, Durham is currently underway.

The two new growth areas will require a design guide and a public realm strategy, with particular emphasis on housing design and sustainable development, but with political support and Unitary status, Rod was very optimistic for the future.



Newgate Street, Bishop Auckland after enhancement

After lunch Durham City and County officers guided TOURS of the City to explore:

- Rejuvenating key public places
- Transport in Durham City
- Park & Ride developments
- Tourism destinations

Delegates returned for workshops on:

- **Coach parking** lead by Gerald Tattum, Marketing Manager, Chester City Council
- **Park & Ride** lead by Richard Stacey, Operations Manager, RPS
- **Parking** lead by Kelvin Reynolds, Technical Director, British Parking Association
- **Bus management** lead by Louisa Weeks, Oxford Bus Company
- **Walking and cycling strategies** lead by Richard Smith, Living Streets
- **Car free historic centres** lead by Steve Melia, Carfree UK, journalist and researcher.

Chair, Brian Human summed up the conference with key messages from the speakers:

- Historic towns are the seedbeds of innovation
- The need for Champions of the Street
- The need to be bold to meet the challenges – to take risks
- The importance of partnerships, linking the issues and a broader vision
- Local solutions for local places
- Visitors should be given the incentive and confidence to explore and to engage with a place
- The impact of the loss of mining has transformed the area but can be a positive transformation of the environment.

He ended by thanking all the speakers, officers in Durham and everyone who had helped to make the event possible.



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