Transport, Environment & Climate Change Select Committee – 14 September 2023

Agenda Item 4 – Public Questions

1. The current cycle route from Wendover to Aylesbury is dreadful (e.g. a lorry parked across the cycle route opposite Dobbies Garden Centre for the last three weeks and the crossing for cyclists at the busy main road A413 near 270 Wendover Road has been removed leaving it extremely dangerous to get from one cycle lane to the other). Given this situation, how will the new plan improve on this, for example will the cycle routes be checked and maintained, and will some group be responsible for enforcing these routes?

   - Richard Dunn

2. How will Buckinghamshire Council, as the LNRS responsible authority, encourage more community involvement and support the work of community led voluntary groups at parish level who are already active in promoting biodiversity?

   - Kirsten Shaw

3. I understand from the HS2 community engagement meeting in the Summer that a large number of trees planted by HS2 (to supposedly compensate for ecological damage to much older trees) have died. Can the council insist that they replace the dead trees with new trees and put in place a management system to ensure the trees don't die again, and in future who will be responsible for managing these trees to ensure they thrive?

   - Vicki Mistry

4. The 'apex goal' of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy is 'thriving plants and wildlife'. Fundamental to achieving this is connecting existing and newly created habitats to increase diversity and ensure the long-term viability of the flora and fauna they support. Only when these habitats are comprehensively mapped can they be properly analysed to see the gaps in wildlife corridors where particularly on low grade farmland natural regeneration can be encouraged, the most effective way of creating thriving habitats and the cheapest. Therefore 'mapping opportunities' is one of the key elements of the LNRS and Geographical Information Systems is a powerful tool for doing this enabling data from many sources to be gathered and shown on a map in as many layers as required so revealing patterns and 'opportunities'.

   At the last meeting of this select committee Buckinghamshire Council confirmed it will be producing a GIS map but it will only 'show the locations of all the Council Land Tree Planting Programme sites', which represents only 2% of the planting required across the UA area to achieve the statutory target for tree and woodland cover by 2050. Will this map now be expanded to include all other existing and future new tree planting sites together with other natural habitats and be made available to the public so that the council and residents can understand and be involved in the important task of restoring our natural world?

   - Andrew Douglas

Due to time restraints, the following questions will not be asked at the meeting however the answers will be appended to the minutes:

5. Are Cabinet, Council Officers and Members of the Local Transport Plan Committee aware of the LCWIP proposal as put together by Arup on behalf of Chesham, and, when adopted by Chesham Town Council, will it receive the full backing of Buckinghamshire Council?

   - Phil Harrison (on behalf of Zone 9; a subgroup of Sustainable Chesham)

6. I'm really impressed with initiatives like the [PickMeUp - High Wycombe] (https://www.carouselbuses.co.uk/pickmeupwycombe) service around the Bucks area and I'm curious if there are any plans to add more of these services? Considering my own experience, living on a road with an adequate bus service, while the value is unquestionable, it's important to address the fiscal and environmental costs of running a somewhat underutilised service (1 - 6 people per hour on each of the 3-4 hours it runs each day.) Looking into options like car-sharing infrastructure similar to [Zipcar] (https://www.zipcar.co.uk/), [Car2Go] (https://www.share-now.com/), or [Enterprise CarShare] (https://www.enterprisecarshare.com/uk/en/home.html) can potentially mitigate the environmental costs of extensive personal car ownership costs while still providing essential transport solutions.

   - Jon Dendy

7. I have read the report on the Local Transport Plan 5 and in section 4.3 you report on the engagement with young people. In light of the disappointing level of engagement with this age group so far, please can you tell me what plans you have to further engage this very important demographic? Perhaps I could suggest that engaging with schools directly might be a good option, there are many areas of the national curriculum that this is linked to and engagement with, at least, all secondary schools in Buckinghamshire would represent a serious attempt to find out the views of young people in the county.

   - Surinder Marshall

8. Unless we start to accept that nature can, and must be, everywhere by managing our whole environment in a more sustainable way, we will continue down the path and thinking that a few really well managed sites is a success. Tree planting with the right trees in the right place is only a small part of the solution and should not be heralded as a huge environmental gain that it often is. Regenerative farming for example, can produce biodiversity benefits far in excess of any tree planting schemes. How does the County plan to put biodiversity back on the map in every 'nook and cranny'?

   - Trevor Brawn