

Change is inevitable: it should be for the better

POLICY STATEMENT TRANSPORT

Summary of policy position

CPRE Gloucestershire is encouraging local authorities, public transport operators and the Highways Agency to implement a range of policies to plan and manage transport infrastructure and provision to serve the needs of Gloucestershire's residents and businesses but in a way that respects the environment and minimises and mitigates adverse impacts on it.

The policies cover travel demand and the location of new development, public transport and park and park and ride, road safety, recreational uses of country lanes, and measures to minimise environmental impact.

Scope

This policy statement is primarily concerned with the planning and management of the road and rail network and the provision of public transport services.

Background

A growing population and increasing affluence has created a rising demand for personal travel and consumer goods and more traffic on the roads. In Gloucestershire the M5, the A417, the A40, the A429 and the A48 have seen greatly increased traffic volumes and congestion is an issue leading to unreliable journey times and drivers resorting to unsuitable alternative routes and minor roads. But the fastest growth in traffic has been on the rural minor roads network. While the economic recession and high fuel prices resulted in traffic volumes stabilising, volumes are anticipated to rise again as economic conditions continue to improve.

Greater accessibility has also created other problems:

- minor improvements to country lanes have damaged their rural character
- vehicle pollutants and traffic noise extend far into rural areas
- speeding traffic has changed the feel of country villages and fatal car crashes occur most frequently on rural roads
- life has become more isolated for rural households without a car.

For public transport, bus services within the major towns are largely commercially run and are reasonably satisfactory, but rural services are sparse and require subsidy. The rail network in the county is limited following the Beeching cuts of the 1960s but the remaining services have been improved and are used increasingly.

CPRE Gloucestershire's Approach

The overall aim should be to limit road traffic growth as far as possible and the need for new and widened roads by ensuring that most new development – such as housing and employment – is located in places that minimise the need to travel altogether. Development should be accessible by foot, cycle and public transport with traffic management policies in place to ensure that travel costs reflect the impact of different travel options on the environment.

CPRE Gloucestershire will encourage local authorities, public transport operators and the Highways Agency to implement a range of policies:

Travel demand

1. Reduce the need to travel by ensuring that new development is focussed on urban areas as a priority. These areas are more likely to provide employment and services in close proximity to where people live.
2. Support existing services in rural areas (such as shops, schools and post offices) in order to improve the accessibility of these services, maintaining local employment and reducing the need to travel for rural communities.

Improving public transport

3. Provide high quality public transport services, including at least a basic network of bus services in rural areas and improved rail timetables and stopping patterns for the smaller rail stations in the county such as Lydney, Cam and Dursley, and Ashchurch, particularly at commuting times.
4. Take advantage of the increased capacity on the rail link to Swindon and London with the completion of the re-doubling of the section from Kemble to Swindon by increasing service frequencies and by providing more through services to London with more services in the evening.
5. Consider provision of additional rail stations close to areas of high population, such as at Stonehouse (on the Bristol route).
6. Provide dedicated bus lanes where fully justified and where this can be done without unacceptable environmental impact and impact on other road users
7. Minimise the effects of local authority cuts in funding on the frequency, quality and responsiveness of rural public bus services.
8. Support innovative approaches to bus services to contain costs, such as Community Transport Services and use of subsidised taxis.
9. Support campaigns to increase use of public transport, emphasising the point “use it or lose it”

Park and Ride

10. Consider provision of further Park and Ride schemes where it can be shown that they would be effective in reducing congestion, are designed in a way that minimises abstraction from existing public transport services, and would not have an unacceptable visual impact on the landscape.

Road safety

11. Improve road safety for residents and all road users by reducing the intimidation and danger caused by speeding traffic. This should include introducing lower speed limits where necessary (e.g. 30 mph as a national default limit for villages but lower where appropriate and supported locally), the use of sensitively designed traffic calming and more use of weight restrictions on minor roads.
12. Ensure a higher standard of road maintenance and encourage people to report pot holes so that these are repaired with the minimum of delay.
13. Improve opportunities for people to walk and cycle in rural areas in safety. 14% of journeys in rural areas are less than a mile, and half are less than 5 miles. More of these trips would be made on foot or cycle if rural routes were safer.

Recreational uses

14. Recognise that country lanes are a recreational resource in their own right and should be conserved for everyone's enjoyment, and consider designation of Quiet Lanes where recreational use is extensive. Gloucestershire County Council had hoped to implement a pilot Quiet Lanes Order in the Cotswold Water Park but did not proceed because of local opposition: there is no policy for Quiet Lanes in the current Local Transport Plan: this should be rectified at next review.
15. Encourage the provision of new rights of way or permissive routes on foot or cycle or horseback to divert such recreational use off public roads where such use is extensive.

Minimising environmental impact

16. Ensure measures to manage traffic in rural areas are sensitive in their design. This should include keeping the number and size of signs to a minimum and periodic clutter audits to remove unnecessary signs.
17. Avoid kerbs on minor rural roads
18. Encourage more use of quieter road surfaces.
19. Ensure the environmental impact of moving freight is minimised. This can be done by signposting and redirecting lorries on to the "County Advisory Freight Routes" and encouraging greater use of rail transport where feasible.
20. Avoid new roads and major improvements to existing roads in rural areas which are likely to encourage traffic growth, focussing on better traffic management and sensitive minor improvements to reduce congestion.
21. Limit further development at Gloucestershire Airport that would lead to noise and pollution locally.

22. Consider the use of canals and rivers as a means of transport for freight and people, e.g. a waterbus service between Quedgeley and The Docks in Gloucester, and for transport for goods which are not time sensitive.
23. Support initiatives which promote cycling.

CPRE Gloucestershire believes a combination of some or all of these measures will be necessary to improve public transport and reduce car dependency in the future thereby limiting damage to the Gloucestershire countryside. CPRE will work with other transport organisations, e.g. the Campaign for Better Transport and Friends of the Earth, to influence Government policy on transport matters.

Revised February 2014

CPRE Gloucestershire Policy Statements are regularly reviewed and updated as necessary. They should be read as a set