

HATOC Councillors
DCC
Exeter

By email
Various email addresses

31 May 2024

Ref.: HATOC meeting on 3 June 2024, Active Streets Trial

Dear Councillors on HATOC,

Our Society has been actively monitoring the Active Streets Trial by meeting with representative of both sides of the unfortunate divide, and discussing issues and solutions with our members. This led to our submission of an 8pp response to DCC's latest consultation, with 18 suggestions for changes – but the overall aim to let the trial run to its preplanned end in order to get long-term results.

We think the report for your meeting on 3 June is unbalanced. It should have reached for a more nuanced **qualitative** analysis of the consultation feedback. The crucial point in the report seems to be its concerns about 'adverse impacts that have been identified for those people with protected characteristics and in consideration of the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty'. It mentions that the mitigations put in place are not deemed satisfactory to address the concerns. BUT it does not look into further mitigations, or adjustments to the current trial to address residents' concerns. National disability reports often attest how different schemes positively affect some disabled people whilst making it more difficult for others with disabilities (<https://www.transportforall.org.uk/news/pave-the-way/>). There are solutions for the concerns raised by people with disabilities or carers that rely on car travel, which the report does not consider.

The way the analysis has been done in the report seems to preclude considerations of whether changes should be made to the scheme to make it more acceptable. It reads very much as either all or nothing. We do not think such an approach can bridge the divide and create a more inclusive situation on the ground in Heavitree and Whipton again.

The report does not appropriately represent positive feedback on the trial, as it does not refer in detail to improvements for all means of traffic, especially walking and cycling, where numbers are considerably up – despite the monitoring time ending on 31 March 2024 with the wet and bad weather conditions this winter and early spring brought.

The analysis of the report is misleading when labelling increases of traffic on boundary road as 'significant'. The counts vary from decreases (-3%) to increases of up to 21% , with this highest increase only on Polsloe Road. This was to be expected with closing off the area for through traffic. DCC have not proposed to put measures in place to mitigate for this and convince more car users to switch to other modes of transport. The bus lane improvement plan only will be implemented later this year and DCC could monitor the effects this might have – just to name a single mitigation measure already on its way to be implemented.

That expenditure to date is higher than in the original budget is to a considerable degree because of vandalism and mitigation for that. This is not a true reflection of the cost of the scheme and these costs should be shown separately to the core costs.

We hope you will consider the wider context at the meeting on 3 June: that the trial is instrumental in the efforts to meet adopted policies and strategies for building an active city, reducing carbon emissions and pollution (e.g. Devon Carbon Plan, Devon Strategic Plan, Exeter Net Zero 2030 plan, Exeter Transport Plan, Live & Move strategy, Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan). Citizens of Exeter have repeatedly endorsed, through consultations and through the ballot box, these policies for building a city which is safe for our children to move freely and safely, a city which is taking climate breakdown seriously, and is reducing road harm.

Can we ask you to ensure in your decision that the Active Streets Trial in Heavitree/Whipton be allowed to run its full course of 18 months so DCC can then give a fair assessment as to whether it has met its objectives with properly analysed data. You can of course ask DCC officers to look into any mitigation and adjustments now to meet the concerns of disabled people and the impact the scheme has on them. If this trial is cancelled prematurely what confidence will HATOC or DCC have to introduce other similar proposals across the city in the near future to meet the outcomes of council policies we have highlighted above?

Thank you for your service to our city.

Yours faithfully

Gert Vonhoff

Chair, Strategic Planning & Highways Group, for ECS Planning Sub-Committee