

Congestion and Air Quality Task Group: Update

Report of the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on DCC's work regarding the 5 recommendations made by the Air Quality & Congestion Task Group on 12th June 2018¹. It also reports on the Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in Devon and provides an update on changes to the wider social, political, and technological contexts in which Devon County Council operates.

2. Background/Previous Work

2.1 In December 2017, an overview report was provided to the Air Quality & Congestion Task Group summarising the current Air Quality and Congestion conditions in Devon².

2.2 The report focussed on 4 AQMAs in Devon County: Ivybridge, Crediton, Braunton and Exeter. In many of these locations, key factors affecting local air quality included the topography of the area and stop start traffic caused by variables such as on street parking, pedestrians interrupting traffic flow and roads nearing capacity during peak hours. The report also discussed the national policy and technologies that are significant drivers in changes to air quality.

2.3 Following the presentation of this report, the task group requested further information regarding workplace parking levies, stacked car parking at existing P&R sites, Devon County Council's work in schools, and data on congestion at the AQMAs identified in the previous report. This information was provided in the supplementary note titled 'Supplementary Highways Note 02: Congestion & Task Group Meeting 26/02/2018'³. The report noted several existing DCC initiatives, and its current position on some of the proposed options such as stacked car parking and workplace parking levies.

2.4 The task group considered the two reports amongst evidence from several others. In June 2018 the task group published 5 recommendations:

1. That Devon County Council (DCC) engages in a targeted communications campaign to promote behaviour change in children's and adult's travel habits to reduce congestion and air pollution.
2. That DCC reviews further opportunities for collaborative working between Public Health, Children's Services and Transport within DCC in responding to air quality and congestion issues.

¹ <http://democracy.devon.gov.uk/documents/g2814/Public%20reports%20pack%2012th-Jun-2018%2014.15%20Corporate%20Infrastructure%20and%20Regulatory%20Services%20Scrutiny%20.pdf?T=10>

² Devon County Council, "Overview of Highways Data at AQMA'S in Devon County"

³ Devon County Council, "Supplementary Highways Note 02: Air Quality & Congestion Task Group Meeting 26/02/2018"

3. That with partners, DCC to review what options can incentivise active travel to promote behaviour change surrounding transport habits in schools.
 4. That DCC consider funding a bus pass for young people aged 16 to 20.
 5. That DCC continues to implement the measures outlined in the Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan (2011-2026) and continues to review the progress of the measures implemented
- 2.5 DCC welcomed the recommendations, though noted that initial estimates for a young person's bus pass would cost in the region of several millions of pounds to implement and run.

3. Changes in social, political and technological context

- 3.1 The position of central government regarding air quality in the UK has remained fairly consistent since the publication of the task group's recommendations, however there have been several notable publications.
- 3.2 In August 2018, the consultation on the governments draft air quality strategy closed, with the final version due to be published soon⁴. The draft Air Quality Strategy focuses on transport alongside other sources of air pollution such as intensive agriculture food production, heating homes and the use of solvents. Transport related measures in the plan largely revolve around cleaner fuels and vehicles, micro plastics and emissions measurement rather than congestion management. It also looks to incentivise active travel through the existing investments outlined in the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy, and shift freight from road to rail⁵.
- 3.3 In addition to the Air Quality Strategy, the Department for Transport (DfT) published the 'Road to Zero' strategy in July 2018⁶ which outlines plans to shift towards cleaner road transport. It outlines the ambition to see at least 50% of new car sales being ultra-low emission by 2030 and commits to taking steps to accelerate uptake amongst all users, including the private car owner, through campaigning and incentives. The report notes its previous commitment to infrastructure, particularly the availability of charging infrastructure through the £400m Charging Infrastructure Fund, the Electric Vehicle Homecharge Scheme, Workplace Charging Scheme and plans to introduce a requirement for all new homes to be Electric Vehicle (EV) ready.
- 3.4 To support the development of electric vehicle infrastructure and autonomous vehicle technologies, the Government approved an Automated and Electric Vehicles Act in July 2018. This Act lays down the legal framework for future legislation which will allow the Government to regulate and improve electric vehicle charging infrastructure in the UK.
- 3.5 Technology is also progressing, with more manufacturers providing a wider range of Electric Vehicles. New models are being introduced to the market every year. Technological developments are typically offering increased battery range which will make them a viable choice for more motorists to consider. Including both pure electric

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/air-quality-draft-clean-air-strategy-2018>

⁵ https://consult.defra.gov.uk/environmental-quality/clean-air-strategy-consultation/user_uploads/clean-air-strategy-2018-consultation.pdf

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reducing-emissions-from-road-transport-road-to-zero-strategy>

and plug-in hybrid vehicles, there are now 120 different models of plug in vehicle to choose from in the UK, offering a low emissions alternative to most types of internal combustion powered vehicle. Ownership of plug in vehicles has been increasing rapidly from around 3,500 registered vehicles in 2013 to 182,000 in October 2018⁷. However, surveys such as the OVO Energy survey (2018)⁸ highlight that despite improving technology and a range of subsidies there are still concerns over the affordability of EVs and the availability of supporting infrastructure.

- 3.6 Transport providers are also making changes, for example locally Stagecoach are actively considering ways to improve the emissions of their vehicles and one way of doing this is to convert them to electric. To enable this process to gain momentum there is a need for some seed corn funding. As a consequence, DCC is working with Stagecoach in a bid to government to support a modest fleet of electric busses.
- 3.7 The bid aims to convert Exeter cross City Park & Ride service to run with full electric vehicles, including heating. Matford Park & Ride is a unique bus depot and Park & Ride site offering the potential to store solar energy for overnight charging. In addition, it has the ability to make the charging facilities available to the public during the daytime. The service operates through Exeter's historic High Street and four areas with poor air quality and links two of the South West's largest industrial areas with the city centre in addition to traditional Park & Ride connections. Funding is requested for the additional cost of purchasing nine vehicles, which includes one spare, along with the infrastructure cost for an innovative battery/solar changing solution.

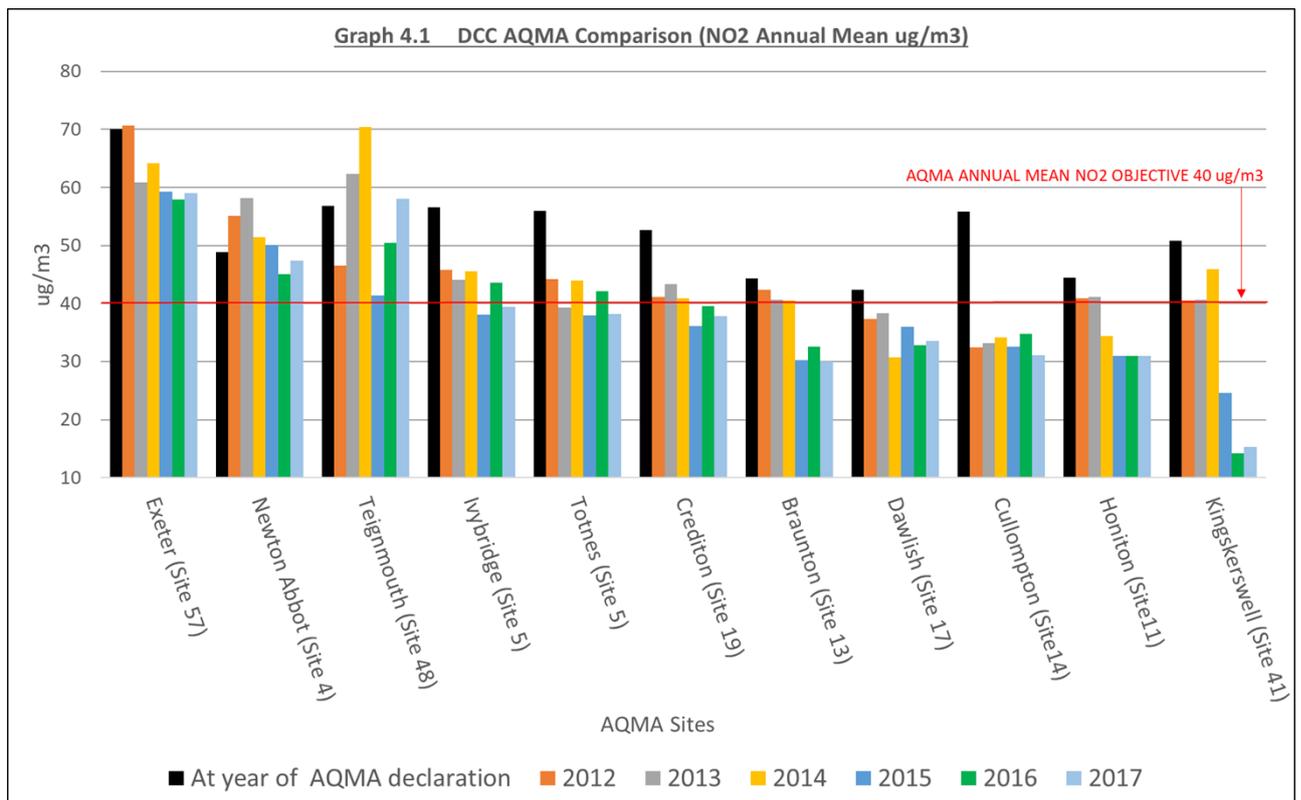
4. An Update on Local Air Quality Management Zones

- 4.1 Since DCC produced the technical notes outlined above, 2017 data has been made available for AQMAs across Devon County. This data shows that air quality in many of the areas highlighted in the previous supplementary task group reports have seen a general overall improvement in air quality.
- 4.2 Graph 1 summarises air quality performance over the last 6 years within the eleven AQMAs that have been declared within the Devon County Council managed highway area.
- 4.3 It should be noted that the Totnes AQMA area was extended in 2016 to encompass an additional monitoring site on the A385 to the east of the town at the True Street junction, Berry Pomeroy. This site has higher recorded NO₂ measurements at 56.19 ug/m³. But this site is at a point where a residential property directly abuts the A385. The figures shown in the graph represent the worst performing site within Totnes is at Bridgetown Hill.
- 4.4 It should also be noted that new monitoring sites were introduced in 2017 within the Newton Abbot AQMA. Some of these sites will monitor the impacts for AQ of planned road improvements. But one new site at Exeter Road has higher recorded NO₂ measurements at 52.84 ug/m³. For comparison with other AQMAs, the table currently

⁷ <https://www.nextgreencar.com/electric-cars/statistics/>

⁸ <https://www.ovenergy.com/blog/ovo-news/whats-stopping-the-electric-vehicle-revolution.html>

identifies the next worst performing site within the Newton Abbot AQMA that is located within Wolborough Street.



4.5 From the eleven AQMAs that were declared within Devon, eight are currently showing 2017 NO2 monitoring levels below the national objective for an annual mean of 40 ug/m3. Under current DEFRA guidance, if annual monitoring shows air quality levels remain consistently below the threshold level for two years, then the AQMA can be considered for revocation. The AQMA at Honiton has now been revoked (April 2018). The AQMAs at Dawlish and Kingskerswell have been identified for revocation in 2019. AQMAs at Cullompton, CREDITON and Braunton are all being considered for a revocation or reduction subject to future monitoring performance.

5. Task Group Recommendations 1 & 3

Targeted Behavioural Campaigns & Incentivising Active Travel Habits in Schools

- 5.1 The Task Group made a recommendation for a targeted behaviour change campaign, focussed on two areas:
- The reduction of short distance car journeys undertaken by parents to transport children to school
 - The reduction of engine idling, particularly outside schools.
- 5.2 The group made a further recommendation to deploy a dedicated officer directly into schools in heavily congested areas, and to make funding available for small capital projects in the vicinity of schools.
- 5.3 There is an on-going programme of support for schools provided through the Access Fund and other previous funds such as the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) since 2012. The current Access Fund is a 3-year programme of engagement and

events funded by a £1.5million grant won by DCC through a competitive bid process to encourage and support active travel in schools, workplaces and communities. Since its start in March 2017, the Access Fund has:

- Engaged with 40 education establishments in our target areas of Exeter, Newton Abbot and Barnstaple
- Delivered over 500 events and activities in schools, organised by officers, schools and Sustrans volunteers
- Held events for a total of over 40,000 attendees
- Organised several larger community events.

- 5.4 It should be noted that due to the Access Fund's limited budget that there is a focus on providing officer support and events over infrastructure to maximise the reach of the fund.
- 5.5 Some events support active travel such as cycle confidence sessions, walking buses and bike maintenance workshops, whilst some actively incentivise it such as the recent 'Leg it to Lapland' campaign. Much of DCC's Access Fund work in schools (carried out largely through Sustrans) already targets the short distance car journey. Activities range from fun competitions to event days, to cycle confidence sessions. These encourage children to become ambassadors for sustainable travel, and influence both their own and their guardians travel decisions in the long-term.
- 5.6 Devon also has a thriving Bikeability programme, which sees DCC working with schools to provide practical skills and understanding how to cycle on today's roads. Bikeability gives children the skills and confidence for all kinds of cycling.
- 5.7 There are three Bikeability levels, each designed to improve cycling skills, no matter what is known already. Levels 1, 2 and 3 take trainees from the basics of balance and control, all the way to planning and making an independent journey on busier roads. More information can be found at: <https://www.traveldevon.info/cycle/cycle-training/>
- 5.8 Paragraph 5.5 of the task group report notes that social media is an effective way to influence behaviours. DCC run two officer led twitter accounts (Travel Devon and Cycle Devon) with a combined total of over 6000 followers and an online newsletter with over 8,000 subscribers. Travel Devon is a benchmark sponsor of the 'Grow Green' initiative and has supported Clean Air Day for the last two years; promoting a 'leave your car at home day' and highlighting positive local case studies of sustainable travel such as IKEA Exeter.
- 5.9 In the future, it may be possible to further utilise the established online comms channels outlined above to promote targeted communications directly related to the two campaigns recommended by the task group. Indeed, Devon County Council is in the process of planning a campaign with a specific environmental message to be rolled out across communications channels in FY 19/20.
- 5.10 With current constraints to funding, the number of schools involved and the increasing demands for projects and studies has led to DCC adopting a proportional level of expenditure approach. Unfortunately, with these constraints it is not currently possible to employ further officers to work directly in schools. The road network is very mature so there are few campaigns for infrastructure, however any request will be considered on its merits per the task groups recommendations.

6. Recommendation 2: Opportunities for Collaborative Working

The Access Fund & Public Health

- 6.1 The Access Fund team works closely with Public Health. There are regular meetings between the two groups to share progress and identify opportunities for collaborative working to achieve common goals.
- 6.2 One such common goal is to increase the amount of active travel in the county. From the Access Fund's perspective an increase in active travel represents a move away from the private car and a reduction in congestion. For Public Health the focus is likely to be more on the health benefits of undertaking regular exercise. Meeting regularly helps the two organisations understand each other's objectives.
- 6.3 An example of collaborative working is at Cranbrook. The town has been developed as one of 10 'Healthy New Towns' in a programme run by the NHS that aims to rethink the way places are designed to provide an innovative approach to the delivery of public services in new housing developments. As such, Cranbrook is a key Access Fund target area for encouraging the uptake of active modes. The town is also one of 12 national Sport England Local Delivery Pilot locations which aims to make Cranbrook an example of best practice in encouraging families to be active together. Though the Sport England Pilot is in its early phases, Public Health are already heavily involved.
- 6.4 It has been identified that the objectives of the Access Fund and Public Health align in for these two projects in Cranbrook. A collaborative approach is being taken to reach the mutual objective of increasing physical activity in the town.

DCC & District Councils

- 6.5 Officers work closely with colleagues from the District Councils in all aspects of planning. This takes account of congestion and air quality. The location of development is key to this process. Sites which have good public transport and cycle connections are strongly supported in the Local Planning process. These tend to be in or adjacent to the built-up areas.
- 6.6 Where there is an AQMA the collaborative approach has resulted in the delivery of several measures to improve air quality as set out in section 5. A good example of this is in Ivybridge where the District Council have purchased a property which, when demolished, is a key element of improving air quality on the main road into Ivybridge.
- 6.7 An innovative example of this collaborative approach is the progress that has been made on the District Heating system at Cranbrook and how it is being rolled out though the East of Exeter Growth area.

7. Recommendation 4: Funding a Young Persons Bus Pass

- 7.1 Recommendation 4 states that DCC should consider funding a young person's bus pass. Whilst this may seem straight forward in theory as there is already a well-established system for the existing bus pass scheme, in practice there are some significant differences which make the introduction of a young person's bus pass more challenging.
- 7.2 The older persons bus pass is a statutory requirement, meaning that all bus providers are required to sign up to the scheme and provide free travel at the point of use which can then be recharged to the local Council. As there is no national requirement for a young-persons pass DCC would need to negotiate with providers, with no guarantee that they would sign up for such a scheme. As such, introducing a county wide young person's bus pass would likely be a complex and resource intensive process.
- 7.3 There are existing programmes in place to help young people to access public transport. Many educational institutions and employers (including Devon County Council) in Devon already have individual agreements with local transport service providers that offer discounted travel. As noted in the Task Groups report Stagecoach already offer a discount card for young people and students. The Access Fund also offer free taster travel vouchers to encourage people to try using public transport and create a shift away from the private car in the long term.
- 7.4 The cost of introducing a Young Person's bus pass is estimated to be in the region of £5m per year. As noted in 'Supplementary Highways Note 02: Congestion & Task Group Meeting 26/02/2018', young people's travel habits already tend to display low proportions of car use therefore the benefit of further incentivising public transport is likely to be relatively low.
- 7.5 In the absence of a statutory requirement for transport providers to accommodate a pass, the existing support available to young people to access public transport, and the limited expected impact of introducing a new bus pass, Devon County Council at this time does not consider that providing a young person's bus pass as recommended by the Task Group presents good Value for Money. DCC will continue to work with schools, colleges and places of employment to support young people in accessing education and jobs through sustainable modes and will continue to look for opportunities to incentivise public transport use that provide good value for money to the public.

8. Recommendation 5: Continue to implement and review progress of the Local Transport Plan

- 8.1 Prior work supported through the Local Transport Plan (LTP) has been important in delivering air quality improvements within the eleven Devon AQMAs identified under Section 4.
- 8.2 The completion of the A380 South Devon Highway in 2017 provided a bypass route for Kingskerswell. This, in conjunction with streetscape improvements within the village centre that support sustainable travel, has resulted in a significant drop in air quality pollution levels. It is anticipated that this AQMA will be revoked this year (2019).

- 8.3 In Crediton the worst performing monitoring sites were located around Exeter Road. The completion of the Crediton Link Road in 2015 that connected the A377 to the Lords Meadow industrial estate has delivered a significant drop in pollutant levels in this area. Part of the High Street area remains close to objective limits and DCC is currently supporting the community in developing streetscape proposals for the A377 route through the town centre. Air quality pollution levels within the town are currently below the annual objective and the AQMA is being considered for reduction or revocation.
- 8.4 At Honiton air quality levels have been improving consistently since the AQMA was first declared. A scheme to improve the Turks Head junction for town traffic joining the A30 was completed in 2016. A new roundabout at this junction has delivered reductions in peak time congestion, reduced journey times and has contributed towards achieving air quality improvements for the town centre. This AQMA has now been revoked (2018).
- 8.5 At Cullompton junction improvements on the High Street\Fore Street were made to both the Station Road and Tiverton Road junctions in order to reduce congestion and support air quality. Microprocessor Optimised Vehicle Actuation (MOVA) control and pedestrian crossing improvements were introduced at the Station Road junction in 2013 and a right turn ban was trialled and introduced at the Tiverton Road junction in 2014. Further work is continuing to support future development growth around the town. The AQMA is being considered for revocation.
- 8.6 At Dawlish the AQMA has been performing well over the last 6 years and is being identified for revocation this year. However further development growth is identified to the west of the community and DCC has been working in partnership for the early delivery of a new link road, bridge and cycle infrastructure to support and mitigate the impacts from this development.
- 8.7 At Ivybridge the LTP is supporting a scheme proposal to provide a new parking facility close to Western Road. This will enable on street parking to be removed and footpath improvements to be introduced on Western Road. Air quality monitoring for 2017 shows pollution levels just below the objective, but the described proposals are aimed at maintaining reductions in pollutant levels and managing the impact of development growth within the AQMA.
- 8.8 Work at Braunton is being planned to support and maintain air quality levels in the village centre. Parking management and car park access improvements were completed in 2013 and 2017 respectively. Further short term and long-term measures have been identified to support the Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) and are being discussed with the parish council. In the most recent dataset (2017) pollutant levels within the original AQMA boundary were below the objective level.
- 8.9 Within Totnes the highest pollutant levels occur on the A385 at Bridgetown Hill, where there are limited opportunities for significantly improving the flow of traffic along the corridor. DCC will support the District with delivery of a revised strategy and AQAP following consultation, however viable measures may need to be focused on supporting sustainable travel for longer term air quality benefits. Potential improvements may include increased car-club provision, walking/cycling improvements

including e-bike club hubs, public transport improvements and exploring opportunities for Electric Vehicle Infrastructure.

- 8.10 Similarly, there are limited opportunities for significant highway improvements to improve traffic flow at Teignmouth on the A379. In Teignmouth the area with the highest monitored AQ exceedances is on A379 Bitton Park Road, though other measurements recorded nearby still show exceedances (the next highest annual mean of 42.68 ug/m³ recorded in 2017). A revised AQAP for Teignbridge and Teignmouth is currently awaiting approval by DEFRA. This identifies 25 generic measures that will need to be developed for each AQAP within Teignbridge and include common themes like cycle networks, public\community transport and sustainable travel links. There has been considerable investment to date in the strategic cycle links connecting Dawlish to the Exe Estuary Trail and work has been continuing to build on this to develop the Teign Estuary Trail between Newton Abbot and Dawlish.
- 8.11 Within Newton Abbot a package of transport measures has been progressed to support traffic management, new developments and air quality in the town. Improvements to the A38\A382 Drumbridges roundabout were completed in 2015 and further road widening and public transport improvements to the A382 corridor are expected to commence in 2020. An associated scheme is being progressed for delivery of an A382-A383 link road through the Houghton Barton development, and work is currently being undertaken to develop a business case for the delivery of a new Wolborough link road connecting the A381 to the A380 via Decoy.
- 8.12 In conjunction with works for the South Devon Highway; access improvements were introduced in 2015 for the Decoy industrial estate, the Heart of Teignbridge walking and cycling strategy is being progressed to support sustainable travel choices around the town, the A38 Heathfield cycle bridge opened in 2015, construction of the A383 sections of the East-West cycle corridor is due to be completed in summer 2019, and other cycle links under the strategy including links at Ogwell, Kingsteignton and in the town centre are either in development or completed.
- 8.13 Within Exeter pollution levels are reducing but remain high at several monitoring sites. Key highway improvements have been delivered in recent years including the A379 Bridge Road widening scheme to increase radial route road capacity, the Cumberland Way link and a Moor Lane junction improvement scheme is planned to commence in 2019. Further transport infrastructure improvements have been delivered to support the East of Exeter growth point. These are outside of the city boundary and AQMA but contribute to improving air quality by supporting sustainable travel into the city centre. The investment includes the strategic cycle route corridor E4 and a new Park & Change planned for Science Park in 2019/20.
- 8.14 New rail stations have been delivered at Cranbrook and Newcourt in 2015 and work is progressing to deliver a further station at Marsh Barton. A new Exeter AQAP was adopted by Exeter City Council (ECC) in 2018. The new measures identified by the AQAP reflect work packages being developed for the GESP (Greater Exeter Strategic Plan), Exeter SUMP (Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan), Sport England Pilot Projects and the Devon and Exeter Low Carbon Energy and Transport Technology Initiative (DELETTI). A key area of future action for air quality in the city includes developing a traffic management solution for the B3138 Heavitree Road\Wonford Hill corridor to reduce vehicular emissions.

Across the county DCC is currently engaged in supporting three grant projects to deliver plug in vehicle infrastructure. This includes providing charge points adjacent to major roads through a Highways England grant for the provision of Rapid Electric Vehicle Charge Points. Providing new public charge points in partnership with District Councils at off street public parking locations across the County. Sites have been identified within towns with AQAP's at Exeter, Honiton, Totnes, Ivybridge, Teignmouth and Newton Abbot. And DCC is a partner in the feasibility stage of a government funded Innovate UK project that could facilitate the roll out of on-street residential charging infrastructure around Exeter.

9. Summary

Recommendation	Action Plan	Progress to date
<p>1) That Devon County Council (DCC) engages in a targeted communications campaign to promote behaviour change in children's and adult's travel habits to reduce congestion and air pollution.</p>	<p>Possible recalibration of the Access Fund</p>	<p>The Access Fund has continued to work with children through our education strand, and employees through our workplace strand to encourage and promote behaviour change. We have ensured that the message is targeted to cover congestion and/or air quality.</p> <p>During FY17/18, it has been calculated that initiatives from the Access Fund programme saved in excess of 850,000 kg CO2.</p> <p>We are planning a specific communications campaign with an environmental message that will be rolled out across our networks and the public.</p>
<p>2) That DCC reviews further opportunities for collaborative working between Public Health, Children's Services and Transport within DCC in responding to air quality and congestion issues.</p>	<p>Contribute to review if required and investigate opportunities for collaborative working where they are identified.</p>	<p>The Access Fund programme collaborates with Public Health and seeks opportunities to ensure that delivery of our projects responds to air quality and congestion issues.</p>
<p>3) That with partners, DCC to review what options can incentivise active travel to promote behaviour change surrounding transport habits in schools.</p>	<p>Review current work with Sustrans for opportunities to promote and incentivise sustainable behaviour change in schools</p>	<p>We have a team of officers currently working with over 20 schools across Exeter, Newton Abbot and Barnstaple to encourage pupils (and staff) to walk, cycle or scoot to school.</p> <p>Since March 2017, we have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engaged with over 40 schools - Delivered over 500 sustainable travel events - Reached over 40,000 pupils directly through our activities

Recommendation	Action Plan	Progress to date
4) That DCC to consider funding a bus pass for young people aged 16 to 20.	Estimates suggest that a bus pass would cost in the region of £4m per annum. There is already a high relative proportion of bus users in this age category and a low relative proportion of car users (even as passengers) so targeting limited funds here would require additional evidence of the benefits of such a scheme.	Through the Access Fund, there is the opportunity to apply for public transport taster tickets to help people into work or education. This scheme is available on our website (https://www.traveldevon.info/bus/tickets/bus-taster-tickets/). Whilst only a taster ticket, it does encourage individuals to try the bus for their travel.
5) That DCC continues to implement the measures outlined in the Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan (2011-2026) and continues to review the progress of the measures implemented.	Continue to progress work for LTP	In progress...

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Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

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Background Paper	Date	File Reference
Nil		