

Harwell Village Cycling Survey / Summary of Top Findings / Aisling Irwin / 10th May 2020

- (1) 101 people replied to the survey. All responses were online. Paper surveys either didn't get distributed or didn't get returned (due to COVID lockdown)
- (2) Of those who responded, they could be grouped into:
 - (i) Frequent cyclists (cycled daily to weekly): 35%
 - (ii) Occasional cyclists (monthly or a few times a year): 45%
 - (iii) Never cycle: 21%
- (3) Some 85% of respondents said they would like to cycle more, including half of those who said that they never cycle.
- (4) Some 55% of respondents explaining why they don't cycle more said it was "too dangerous".
- (5) Of the reasons cited for cycling the biggest was "enjoyment" (65%), followed by "health" (57%). And in a further question, about motivation for the most recent cycle ride, two-thirds cited leisure and fitness reasons (67%). Concern to reduce carbon footprint came third at 39%, though almost everyone who cited this also cited other reasons, so it's hard to know how much of a motivating force it is.
- (6) Over a third of respondents had, on their most recent cycle ride, gone to Didcot to do errands (36%) or cycled to work (34%). For over a quarter it was an errand in Harwell (28%) and another quarter had travelled to the station (26%). (these percentages add up to more than 100, likely because of people combining two destinations in their most recent journey).
- (7) Of these most popular destinations, those who said they do not cycle to them but would like to include errands in Didcot (40%); errands in Harwell (36%), getting to the station (28%) and cycling to work (14%). This indicates that the biggest "hunger gap" lies in being able to access Didcot easily followed by being able to cycle around Harwell village, and, in third place, getting to the station. While there is a small hunger to cycle to work it seems that most of those who wish to do this are already finding a way.
- (8) When given freedom to mention where they would like to cycle to, the most common desire was to get out and about for leisure in the countryside and to neighbouring villages (10 responses); while other destinations mentioned included Abingdon (2), Wantage (3), and along the A34 between Chilton and the Bury Lane junction to get to West Ilsley junctions.
- (9) The overwhelming factor that people felt would help them cycle more was better cycle routes (82%) followed by information on cycle routes (25%). Other factors rated poorly (5% or below) and these included having access to a bike, to cycle coaching, to a cycling group, to enthusiastic family members, cheaper kit or maintenance workshops.
- (10) A quarter of respondents took the time to comment further on what would encourage them to cycle and these fell into the following categories:
 - (i) Better road surfaces: 6
 - (ii) Roads made less dangerous (eg. traffic calming, cycle lanes): 6
 - (iii) Off road cycle lanes: 3

- (11) Some 66 respondents made further comments when invited to, which reiterated common concerns about road surfaces and poor provision on roads for cyclists. Most commonly:
- 13 people wrote of their frustration at the lack of safe cycling from Harwell village into Didcot;
 - 5 people cited the increased need for safe cycling provision with the new housing developments;
 - 6 people highlighted the patchy nature of cycling provision and failure to join up the bits;
 - 7 people complained about cyclists, whether because of their behaviour towards pedestrians on shared paths, their failure to use dedicated cycle paths instead of the roads or the braking effect they have on motorised traffic.

There were many individual suggestions for improved provision for cyclists on specific roads around Harwell as well as several suggestions for measures within the village, which can be found in the list of comments under Question 8. Two more unusual suggestions included having car-free days on the occasional weekend; and closing Grove Road to motorised traffic so that it becomes a place for pedestrians and cyclists.

(12) Some quotes from the survey:

"The condition of many of the road surfaces is very dangerous I prefer to take the bike on a rack on the car and cycle further afield"

"It's really all about safety. I'm always with my children and there are very few places I feel safe cycling with them."

"During the past 2 years I've cycled extensively in Europe and our lack of usable cycle paths is a national disgrace when compared with Netherlands, France, Germany, Austria and Switzerland."

"Until access within the village and into Didcot is safer and properly provided I will continue to have to use my car."

"I would like to see more ambition"

"Almost impossible to cycle safely locally."

"The route to Didcot is awful. Road is filthy and often flooded, pathways are narrow and poor quality."

"Roads in appalling condition; drainage gulley's and drain holes not cleaned meaning you have to cycle through huge puddles."

"I fell off in the village as I hit a pot hole"

Conclusions

There was a healthy response to the survey, and a good span of people from those who never cycle to those who cycle frequently.

There is a strong desire to cycle more and a widespread sense of it being too dangerous to do so.

There is a need for safe and coherent cycle routes, primarily between Harwell village and Didcot and also within Harwell village.

There is an overwhelming desire to be able to get into Didcot safely, and safety breaks down into improved road surfaces, joined up cycle routes and a better relationship with motorised traffic.

There is also a substantial desire to be able to cycle around the village safely (some ideas for how to achieve this can be found within the comments on Question 8) and to enjoy the local countryside more easily through cycle routes alongside roads that have none and a better surface on off-road cycle routes.

Other measures to help people onto their bikes (such as maintenance workshops) are unlikely to be worth the expenditure of money and energy at the moment with the exception of providing information on local cycling routes.

There are concerns from some villagers about sharing pedestrian paths with cyclists.

Recommendations to take forward

The survey results indicate there is a strong desire to improve cycling within the parish, delivering both health and environmental benefits to residents.

The Government has very recently announced a new £2 billion fund to promote more cycling as one of the ways to ease the current Coronavirus lockdown. A plan to support this fund will be available next month.

For these reasons Sustainable Harwell believes that there is currently a strong case for taking bold and fast action. We call for quick decisions to realise these benefits.

Specific Actions and Opportunities:

In addition to calling for the improvement of cycling provision widely across the parish we believe there is one immediate opportunity which could be implemented quickly to realise the key wishes of residents completing the survey.

Creation of a Cycle Street along Harwell High Street

- We believe the creation of a Cycle Street along the length of Harwell High Street from the Reading road T-junction to the roundabout on the GWP side of the A34 bridge would bring about health and environmental benefits to residents in Harwell without unduly affecting motorised road users.
- Cycle Streets vary in appearance and have been successfully used in The Netherlands and Germany. They work by changing the priority of road use from cars to cyclists. For example, cyclists can cycle two abreast and car-users have no right to overtake them. Car-users should behave as though they are driving in a cycle lane and give priority to cyclists at all times. The speed of cars should also be restricted and reduced from 30 mph to 20 mph. This speed restriction would make a car journey along the length of Harwell High Street from the Reading Road to the A34 bridge at most a minute longer.
- To bring this about this change, new signage could be introduced to reduce motor traffic speed along the Cycle Street. The Cycle Street would provide priority to cyclists, making them feel safer using the road space. It would also provide a safe cycle route virtually all

the way to Didcot which is what people say they want. It will encourage more people to commute to the train station and Didcot shops as well as local shops in GWP.

- There could also be a temporary cycle lane created on the left side of the road between the GWP roundabout to the cycle route which had now been as part of GWP. This would close the remaining gap and provide a safe cycle route all the way to Didcot.

The Cycle Street could be set up quickly but could be started as a temporary change and its success monitored.

- **Changes required**

- New signs to signify Cycle Street
- More permanent changes (which could be implemented later)
- Resurface the road and change colour of road surface to signify Cycle Street
- Introduce traffic calming chicanes

Other actions:

- Install bicycle locking points in the village – for example, outside the shops, the recreation ground and the pub

ENDS

