



Chesterfield Liberal Democrats

<https://chesterfieldlibdems.org.uk/>

Dear Alastair,

Thank you for your question on 15th August.

The Liberal Democrats have always supported well thought out and practical measures to improve both public transport and walking/cycling.

As the BBC article you refer to (14th August 2020) notes Wera Hobhouse MP, Lib Dem Environment Spokeswoman, said that it was time to "fundamentally rethink transport" and that "to get cars off the road, local authorities need to be given the power and the resources to adapt road layouts to create distinct cycle lanes, separating cyclists from traffic." Wera has regularly made such points, not least in a speech she made in a Parliamentary debate on Active Transport on 9th July 2019, long before the current COVID crisis brought such issues into public prominence.

Back on 16th July 2020 local Lib Dem Cllr Keith Falconer was reported in the Derbyshire Times as saying " local authorities have been urged by the Government to make significant changes to their road layouts to give more space to cyclists and pedestrians..But I don't see much evidence of this in Chesterfield.....Is this not time for some blue sky thinking from Derbyshire County Council?

Encouraging walking and cycling to school for example through the introduction of 'school streets'introducing 20mph speed limits for residential roads.....trailing a bike hire scheme or supporting the introduction of e-bikes." Subsequent weeks have seen Derbyshire Times coverage of Cycle campaigners calling for safer school cycling networks just like those Keith was advocating.

Of course making such fundamental changes to transport patterns is no easy task, especially given the chronic underfunding of public transport in most areas outside London plus the nature of our narrow and congested urban road network much of which was built before car ownership was widespread. The current concern is that although road congestion fell dramatically during Lockdown it is likely to be worse once a full return to work occurs. Not only because public transport has reduced capacity due to social distancing measures but also because some will avoid the confined spaces of bus and rail compartments.

Making significant and permanent changes will be expensive and cannot be done overnight but as always the sooner we start the better. It is however also important that such changes are practical and workable. The Government has indicated that it will not sign off on funding for projects which are temporary and simply consist of putting up some plastic barriers for example.

Consultation, rather than acting in haste, will also lead to much better outcomes. As Cllr Keith Falconer pointed out when he, and many others, criticised the DCC encouragement of walking to the Town Centre from Ravenside via South Place, when this would mean finding a £100 fine notice upon returning to the Ravenside car park! The 'temporary' closure of Crow Lane to encourage cycling to the Royal Hospital is another example. At July's Derbyshire County Council meeting the Labour County Cllr for Brimington strongly attacked this closure because he said it was 'not consulted on, was opposed by his constituents and very few people would cycle up Crow Lane anyway.' That evening at the Chesterfield Borough Council meeting a Labour Borough Cllr for Brimington, who is also the Leader of CBC, repeated these strong condemnations. It may or may not be that Crow Lane is now a popular cycle route to the Royal Hospital but hopefully DCC will have learned from these mistakes as regards imposing such measures without consultation.

Chesterfield Liberal Democrats have always supported practical and workable measures to improve walking, cycling and public transport and will continue to do so.

Yours,

Tom Snowdon,

Chair,

Chesterfield Liberal Democrats