

# Rural Worcestershire

## Chapter 24 - Rural Worcestershire

The rural areas of Worcestershire represent different challenges for the provision of sustainable transport. The dispersed nature of small settlements, the lack of local facilities and employment opportunities, and the difficulties of providing public transport services, all lead towards the use of the private car as the dominant mode of transport.

A package of measures will evolve throughout the 5-year LTP period, which provide realistic opportunities for sustainable transport in the rural areas. These will primarily be promoted through the Integrated Public Transport Strategy, Bus Strategy, Freight Strategy, Walking Strategy and Cycling Strategy.

### Village Speeds Initiative

The County Council is currently implementing a Speed Limit Strategy that will result in new speed limits in villages throughout the County and enhance the quality of life in rural Worcestershire.

The policy of the previous Authority, Hereford and Worcester County Council, was to adhere fairly closely to the speed limit criteria produced by the Department of Transport (DoT). Although the criteria were commended to Local Authorities for use on roads for which they were responsible, it was for the Authority to decide whether or not to use the guidelines on local roads.

The County Council has taken the initiative of introducing new speed limits in the County villages based on the presumption that 30 mph is the appropriate limit in most cases without strict adherence to DoT justification criteria. £1 million has been allocated by the County to implement the strategy and over the next 3 years the villages in the County are being given the option of having a 30 mph speed limit introduced.

The needs and expectations of the local community take precedence over the passing motorists and the strategy is seen as a way of reducing speeds and road casualties without imposing uncharacteristic measures. It is anticipated that a County Wide approach will make a positive contribution to speed reduction in the County, with the minimum of signing at entry points and without extensive 'gateway' treatment, physical traffic calming or sign clutter.

The initiative is being introduced on the basis of continuous routes so that people living in an area with a speed limit would respect the need to reduce their speed when driving in other communities. The whole of the village will be included in the limit, not just the through route. On this basis, responsibility for implementation has been given to the Highways Partnership Units (HPU's). The strategy has initially been progressed in Wychavon and is currently being simultaneously developed in Malvern and Wyre Forest and is imminent in Bromsgrove.

### Quiet Lanes

In conjunction with the Village Speed Limit Strategy, the County Council are identifying a network of Quiet Lanes in accordance with Countryside Agency Guidance to make rural roads safer for travelling by foot, horseback or cycling.

A very high proportion of the county is rural land. The County believes that the ‘Quiet Lanes’ initiative has a valuable role to play in delivering benefits to those who live, work and travel in the countryside. As well as increasing travel choice for those who do not have access to the car. The aim of this initiative is to ensure that motorised and non-motorised alike feel comfortable in using rural roads, creating a viable network for all forms of transport. This accords entirely with national and local policy objectives of improved accessibility for rural areas and increase in modal choice.

HPU’s and Parish Councils have advised on those roads within their areas which are suggested as possible Quiet Lanes. Map 10.1 shows the location of these sites and these are listed in Appendix 10a.

The type of measures to be deployed as part of the ‘Quiet Lanes’ initiative include lower speed limits (encompassed as part of the County Council’s 30 mph Village Speed Limit Initiative), modest engineering measures (such as road narrowing, sensitive landscaping and special surfacing) and local measures to encourage other forms of transport to the private car. These measures will be tailored to suit the local environment, and will be delivered in close consultation with the individual local communities.

It is anticipated that similarly to national pilot studies, local pilots will be undertaken at 3 different sites within the County to identify appropriate engineering measures, and aid essential consultation, before undertaking a County wide implementation programme during years 3 to 5 of this LTP, with the aid of the Parish Councils. It is envisaged that Quiet Roads measures can be implemented in parallel with villages where the Speed Limit initiative is being introduced and the additional funding for the measures will be sought through the LTP. Discretion will be given to the HPU’s to decide which roads would be best suited to being developed from the nominations gathered from Parish Councils and HPU’s previously.

## **The Joint Worcestershire Health and Public Transport Initiative (JWHPT)**

The JWHPT working group is keen to promote better transport provision across the entire County. The initiative encompasses all types of public transport, ranging from mainstream bus through to social car and shared taxi services. The key inter-urban services will be enhanced and high quality rural interchanges developed in key villages on the routes. Social car, demand responsive taxi services and community minibus services will be developed to link at these interchanges, offering guaranteed connections and through ticketing. To address issues of social exclusion resulting from distance, such as travel cost, fares initiatives will be developed

### **Car Clubs**

The Community Council is currently investigating the potential for piloting a Rural Car Club scheme. The scheme would be similar to the City Car Clubs of Edinburgh and other European cities. However, a rural car club will be addressing the issue of social exclusion experienced by those without access to a car in more isolated areas. If the pilot proved successful there is scope to develop a County-wide scheme and provide a more comprehensive scheme with greater flexibility for the car club member.

Essentially a car club is made up of a number of people who are the joint owners of a car e.g. ten people to one car. The car club members can then book the car for a number of hours, arrange to pick up the keys, carry out their journey and then return the car. There are also favourable rental arrangements for those requiring a vehicle for a long term loan e.g. for a two week holiday.

Setting up such a scheme requires significant investment in I.T. with a computerised booking system and Smart card technology as well as the purchase of the vehicle. There are then the ongoing costs of administering and marketing the scheme.

Public consultation will be carried out to determine the most suitable village to carry out the pilot based on the amount of interest expressed.