

Connecting Leeds Consultation & Engagement

Date: 25/09/2024

Report of: Chief Officer, Highways & Transportation

Report to: Scrutiny Board (Infrastructure, Investment & Inclusive Growth)

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

The Connecting Leeds team and brand was established in 2016 for the Leeds Public Transport Investment Programme (LPTIP) to ensure thorough communications and public consultation with Leeds residents. That same year, 8000 people took part in informing the council's Transport Strategy – setting out a vision for Leeds to be a city where everyone has affordable, zero-carbon travel choices.

Since then, the Connecting Leeds team has become a recognisable brand for the Leeds transport strategy and has held over one hundred consultations across the city. With each one we learn new and better ways of doing things whether that be in relation to a location/venue, timings, communication, presentation of materials, stakeholder management, or managing

Recommendations

- a) Members are asked to note the content of the report.
- b) Members are asked to make suggestions of potential improvements the service can make to consultation and engagement.

What is this report about?

- 1 This report provides an overview of the activities undertaken by the Connecting Leeds Team and examples of best practice and how continuous improvements have been made since it was established in 2016.

What impact will this proposal have?

Connecting Leeds brand

- 2 The Connecting Leeds team and brand was established in 2016 for the LPTIP infrastructure programme to ensure thorough communications and public consultation with Leeds residents. That same year, 8000 people took part in informing the council's Transport Strategy – setting out a vision for Leeds to be a city where everyone has affordable, zero-carbon travel choices.
- 3 Since then, the Connecting Leeds team has become a recognisable brand for the Leeds transport strategy and has held over one hundred consultations across the city. With each one we learn new and better ways of doing things whether that be in relation to a location/venue, timings, communication, presentation of materials, stakeholder management, or managing risks.

Connecting Leeds database

- 4 Connecting Leeds has a mailing list of 19,000 subscribers who receive a Connecting Leeds newsletter monthly – promoting forthcoming consultations, providing consultation results and construction updates.

Maximising reach

- 5 For each public consultation we always take an integrated communications approach that uses a mix of communication channels to maximise local engagement. For example, online advertising runs concurrently with social media, letters to residents, distribution of flyers/posters, press releases etc which maximises the opportunities to see (OTS) for the public to find out about a local consultation.
- 6 This approach meant that for the Active Travel England (ATE) A660 consultation in January 2023 we were able to generate 12,947 hits to our consultation webpage, of which over 13% (1709) completed a survey which is a very good conversion rate for such for a complexed scheme that contained 53 changes to the road infrastructure.

Survey design

- 7 Each survey is split down into smaller chunks so the public can view and read about each proposed change in more detail and then usually using a matrix style question, tick a box to indicate on a sliding scale whether they feel very positive to very negative about it. (Appendix 1)
- 8 Wording of the proposals and survey questions are written in plain English, steering away from highways technical language and where this is hard to avoid, we provide a key with a short description. To aid understanding of scheme proposals, we've created a structure of 'existing issue, proposal, benefits, trade-offs'. These are also supported where appropriate with photos, artist's impressions, and a FAQ section.



- 9 As well as quantitative style questions we also include a free text box that enables someone to provide more feedback about why they have scored a proposal a certain way.
- 10 So that we can continue to improve our surveys we add a final question that asks, 'how easy was this survey to understand'. Of the 1709 responses we received for the ATE A660 consultation, only two people found the survey hard to understand. A free text box wasn't added to find out more information, but this is something we are looking to add to future surveys.

Online and in-person

- 11 Online promotion is the most efficient way for us to promote our consultations and measure their impact. For example, for social media and online digital adverts, we can monitor the reach, who they've targeted, where they live and how they found out about the consultation. This provides invaluable insight to enable us to see where the gaps are, in other words who we aren't reaching, and then we can adapt our campaign and targeting to reflect this.
- 12 However, not everyone is as digitally enabled, and we realise the importance of using offline as well as online communication channels. This includes the distribution of flyers, engaging with Leeds Involving People (LIP), identifying local stakeholders to help spread the word as well as holding in-person consultation events, where people can read about the scheme on super-sized information boards, ask questions, and complete a paper version of the survey. For larger-scale consultations like the ATE A660, four public events were held in different locations to encourage people less digitally confident to have their say.

Area demographics

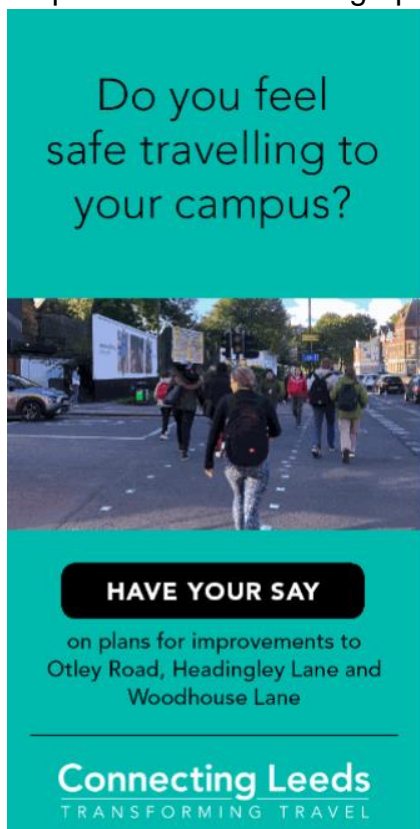
- 13 Connecting Leeds doesn't just want to reach as many people as possible to have their say, we also want to hear from people that are less likely to engage with us as it's important that the responses we receive reflect an area's demographics as much as possible.
- 14 We use third-party organisations and 2021 ONS census data (Leeds Observatory) as audience research before consultation. The data includes demographic ward make-up and acts as a KPI to benchmark consultation responses against. This allows us to tailor our communications to certain demographic types, which is particularly important when trying to reach under-represented groups. When analysing survey results, consideration is given to who took part (area demographics), as well as cross-tabulating this with their responses to specific questions. Some survey questions are also analysed to see if views are different from those living in the immediate local postcode versus those who live in other areas of Leeds.

Stakeholder engagement

- 15 At the early planning stages of a consultation, we work hard to establish who the local stakeholders are, so they are included in our communications plan. Not only do we consult with stakeholders during the 'consultation period', but for larger or more complex schemes like the A660 and more recently Armley Town Street we identify key stakeholders at the concept design stage so they can have some influence on the design before we go out to formal consultation. We have found this to be an invaluable way of gathering local insight so that when we do go out to formal consultation, we have more meaningful conversations with people.
- 16 We have a master stakeholder list for the city that is continually evolving and being updated. We are also building ward specific stakeholder lists, so we have more hyperlocal contacts and networks to promote our consultations too.

Monitoring performance

- 17 To measure success, we create 'weekly-reach-reports' that provide snapshots of demographics available vs demographics reached so far, enabling targeted weekly communications and agile messaging to focus on those still under-represented. Three weeks into the ATE A660 consultation, despite people aged 18-25 being a large portion of the local demographic, we were struggling to get them to engage. In response we created an online advert to target this audience, which together with leafleting on campus to students helped us increase the survey responses for this demographic.



- 18 At the close of every consultation a final communications evaluation report is produced to measure success and provide any learnings for future.

Lessons learnt

- 19 At the end of every consultation, we hold a lesson learnt session to discuss what went well and what we could improve on. This is usually structured over half a day with breakout sessions to encourage reflection and discussion. Findings of these are then recorded and saved in our project management office so that they can be drawn upon by other council officers.

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

- 20 Our master stakeholder list for Leeds currently has a list of over 750 contacts on it. It has details of organisations and community groups from various sectors, for example - Leeds Youth Council, Leeds Disabled People's Organisation, Leeds Older People's Forum, Leeds Society for Deaf and Blind People, LGBTQ+, University of Leeds, Women's Health Matters, Leeds Chamber of Commerce etc.
- 21 For a recent consultation we used 'what3words' to orientate those with neurodiverse needs, created different line-types on maps to overcome colour-blind barriers, and worked with local blind groups to develop a 3D-printed, touchable-model so they could 'see' plans with their hands.



- 22 To remove other barriers, we introduced QR codes as standard on materials aiding ease of language-translation or screen-reading.
- 23 We've also made progress in improving the gap between male and female contributions. Typically, responses received are from those people that identify as male over female. For phase 1 of the Connecting West Leeds consultation in 2022, 72% of responses were from males, when they accounted for 48% of the area's residents. For Phase 2 we deliberately placed more emphasis on targeted communications to women, which resulted in a 48% male, 50% female, 1% non-binary split that represented the ward's demographic.
- Example – online advert 'depicts the outline of a female with a pushchair'.



- 24 Another example is the ATE A660 consultation, where we increased engagement with older residents and people with disabilities by engaging with the Age-Friendly-Steering-Group which resulted in extra seating being provided in the final design. For this consultation we also engaged with students at universities and sessions with Young People's Voice Influence and Change Team - where the group commented on the maps and images "being really good", and the plans being "accessible and very clear".

25 Influencer marketing is something the team is looking into and is keen to hear of any suggestions.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

26 The Connecting Leeds Transport Strategy is based on the three pillars with the schemes consulted on by the Connecting Leeds team contributing to all.

27 Health & Wellbeing is met through improved air quality, reduced noise and casualty reduction, plus health benefits through greater levels of active travel.

28 Improving the efficiency of the transport network supports inclusive growth, making access to employment, education, and leisure opportunities better for all in the city.

29 Zero carbon is addressed by reduced vehicle emissions through mode shift and electrification of the vehicle fleets.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected: All

Have ward members been consulted?

Yes

No

30 This is an information report for Scrutiny Board which does not require consultation. All reports are published in advance of the public meeting.

What are the resource implications?

31 The majority of costs for delivering the Connecting Leeds consultation work is covered by recharging to scheme budgets which are externally funded from central government grants via the Combined Authority.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

32 By adopting the Connecting Leeds approach to consultation and engagement we ensure decision makers are aware of public sentiment about schemes prior to implementation, reducing the risk that we not delivering the right outcomes for the people of Leeds.

What are the legal implications?

33 There are no legal implications

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

34 Each scheme consultation is delivered to suit the scheme and local area characteristics.

How will success be measured?

35 Examples are shown above of how we monitor feedback throughout each consultation and adapt our approach accordingly.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

36 Consultations are scheduled within each scheme programme and are the responsibility of SRO for each scheme. All public materials used are cleared by the Chief Officer, Highways & Transportation and the Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Sustainable Development.

Appendices

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Background papers

Appendix 1

Section 1: A64(m) Marsh Lane to Naseby Walk

This page details proposals for the A64(m) Marsh Lane to Naseby Walk.

If using the navigation app 'What 3 Words' this is [///engine.shed.motor](#) to [///tunes.take.shared](#).



Existing issues:

- No safe crossings for cycle users
- Bus stops within close proximity of each other slows down bus journey times

Proposals:

- New signalised crossings for cycle users
- Relocation of the existing bus stop at Bridge Community Church (relocated between Rigton Approach and Nippet Lane)
- Relocation of existing pedestrian crossings at Rider Street
- Banned right turn into Rider Street. Access to Rider Street will still be maintained

Benefits:

- Safer for people walking, wheeling and cycling
- More welcoming environment
- Quicker journey times for bus users

Trade-offs:

- Some bus users will have to travel further to a bus stop
- Slightly longer journey times for some motor vehicles due to diversion
- Loss of up to four trees in this section

Why are you proposing the banned right turn/ what does this mean for general traffic? ▼

Why are you proposing to relocate the bus stop? ▼

Why are you removing trees as part of the scheme? ▼

How do you feel about each proposal in this section?

	Very positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very negative
New signalised crossings for cycle users	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relocation of the existing bus stop near Bridge Community Church	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relocation of existing pedestrian crossings at Rider Street	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Banned right turn into Rider Street	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Overall, how do you feel about proposals in this section?







Very positive Very negative

Please tell us more about how you ranked the proposals above.

Write your answer here.