

Newcastle Cycling Forum: Proposed Merger Survey 2015



**Policy and Communications Team
Assistant Chief Executive's Directorate**

Newcastle Cycling Forum Survey 2015

This report summarises the findings from the Newcastle Cycling Forum Survey 2015, which ran between **17 December 2014 – 31 January 2015**. It has been compiled by a different section of the Council than that which commissioned the survey – ensuring an independent analysis.

The City Council invited people on the Newcastle Cycling Forum / Cycle News mailing list to take part in an online survey on the Let's talk Newcastle website, and give us their views on the following proposal to merge the Newcastle Cycling Forum with the Cycle City Ambition Fund Stakeholder Group:

“We are looking again at how we engage with people who cycle in Newcastle about what we need to do to make Newcastle Fit for Cycling. We think it would be more efficient to merge the Cycling Forum with the Cycle City Ambition Fund Stakeholder Group, and hold meetings every two months instead of every three months. We would like to get views on this proposal from people who are members of either or both of these groups, who cycle in Newcastle, or who have an interest in cycling in the city.”

32 people took part in the survey, and this report describes what they said. It was prepared by Louise Reeve, Policy and Communications Business Partner in the Policy and Communications Team (tel: 0191 2777 508, email: louise.reeve@newcastle.gov.uk).

Summary of findings

The main findings were:

- Most people who took part in the survey (26 out of 31) **generally agreed** with the proposal.
- 4 people generally **disagree** with the proposal. 5 others disagreed with specific aspects of it, but supported it as a general idea.
- 9 people had **other comments** to make about it, mostly focussing on the need the newly-merged Forum would have for efficient and focussed chairing of meetings, and also to ensure that it does not become a “talking shop”.
- 30 people made **general comments** about how we could engage better with cyclists in Newcastle. The most common themes in these comments were: “have better publicity for infrastructure consultations, like Northumbria Water’s” (5 people said this) and “provide information, such as maps to help people plan routes using cycle paths” (4 people said this).

About the people in the survey

The majority of people in the survey were male (17 out of 32 people), and the biggest age group was people aged between 45-60 (9 people). Most were employed full-time (19 out of 32 people), and most were White British (22 out of 32 people). Most wards were represented in the survey.

Positive views on the proposal

1. What do you like about the proposal to merge the Newcastle Cycling Forum and the Cycle City Ambition Fund Stakeholders Group?

30 people answered this question, 26 of whom described what they liked about it. Of the other four, one was not sure which groups were being discussed, and three were not in favour of it (their comments have been included in the table for the next question). The table below shows the main themes in people's comments.

Positive thoughts about the proposed merger	No. of people who said this
More efficient	13
Greater simplicity	5
More coherent approach	4
Generally happy with it	3
Will save time	3
Fewer meetings	2
More focussed approach	2
Will improve quality of decision-making	2
Will produce a more authoritative voice	2
Good to bring expertise together in one place	1
Smaller gaps between meetings	1
Total no. of people who commented*	26

* Some people's comments contained several themes, so the numbers of comments on themes may total more than 26.

Comments included:

"Cycle users need to have a cohesive voice to influence real improvements in both infrastructure and attitudes to cycling".

"It is a sensible efficiency improvement, allowing the new body to speak with greater authority."

"It means discussions on cycling improvements in the city are held in one place at one time. It should ensure the process is as integrated as possible".

Negative views on the proposal

2. Are there aspects of the proposal that you do not like?

18 people answered this question, nine of whom replied that there were no aspects of the proposal that they did not like. Four objected to the proposal as a whole, and five said that they generally liked the proposal, but there were aspects of it they did not like. The table below shows the main themes in people's comments.

Are there aspects of the proposal that you do not like?	No. of people who said this
There are no aspects of the proposal that I do not like	9
People who objected to the proposal as a whole:	4
Do not like any of it	1
Would rather see them kept separate, but with two joint meetings each year.	1
Am not sure that the change will make a significant difference.	1
Feel that the Forum will be dominated by people who only care about making a profit	1
People who agree with the proposal as a whole, but objected to specific aspects of it	5
There should be at least four to six meetings a year, not two, so that momentum is not lost	1
Some of the terminology will mean little to members of the public.	1
Will the meetings be more unwieldy, with more people attending?	1
Will there be enough meetings to consider cycling matters in sufficient detail?	1
Having a dual chair, plus a vice chair, seems a bit "clunky"	1
Total no. of people who commented	18

Comments included:

"It doesn't sound good to me, as there is a risk that, just like all that's been going on for the last 40 years, the profit-maniacs will dominate the Cycling Forum, and destroy democracy and the environment."

"The very wording of the proposals suggests that this is really only aimed at those who are professionally involved."

Other comments on the proposal

3. Do you have any other comments on the proposed merger?

Nine people answered this question. The table below shows the main themes in their comments.

Do you have any other comments on the proposed merger?	No. of people who said this
Difficult to comment until changes are made	1
Feel that it will mainly be an administrative change	1
Feel that the Forum and the CCAF only engage with a small number of Newcastle cyclists, also that there needs to be a clear distinction between collective groups and individuals participating in the merged group	1
Feel that the forum has a tendency to go over the same topics again and again, and this needs to be addressed	1
Feel there is too much discussion, and there now needs to be more of a sustained and co-ordinated effort to improve infrastructure.	1
Need to enforce the proposals that items must be referred to the Chair before the meeting.	1
Need to improve some of the defects of the Forum, for example there needs to be more users involvement	1
Unsure about wording of the proposal	1
Will need disciplined chairing	1
Difficult to comment until changes are made	1
Total no. of people who commented	9

Comments included:

“I'm uncertain what this would mean in reality and from a practical perspective. The proposal says: ‘The Cycling Stakeholder Forum would be in a crucial position to influence and advise the council and its officers about the delivery of its agreed policies’. What is being put into place to make the position “crucial”? For example, will the Forum be the last point of reference prior to decisions being taken?”

How we could engage with cyclists generally

4. What else do you think Newcastle City Council should be doing to engage with cyclists?

30 people answered this question. The table below shows the main themes in their comments, of which the most common themes were: “have better publicity for infrastructure consultations (like Northumbria Water’s)” (five people) and “provide information, such as maps to help people plan routes using cycle paths” (four people)

What else do you think Newcastle City Council should be doing to engage with cyclists?	No. of people who said this
Better publicity for infrastructure consultations (like Northumbria Water's)	5
Provide information, such as maps to help people plan routes using cycle paths	4
Use online consultation methods such as Let's talk Newcastle	3
Create more segregated cycle lanes	3
Carry out regular consultations with cyclists	3
Advertise the Cycling Forum more	3
Promote idea of using cycling for transport, not just sport or hobby	2
Better use of social media	2
Work with Newcastle Cycling Campaign	1
Work with employers and universities to promote cycling	1
Restoring the named cycling officer	1
Respond promptly to feedback	1
Quicker circulation of agenda and minutes	1
Put shelters over cycle racks	1
Publicise methods for people to contact the council with feedback on cycling improvements	1
Provide more cycle paths and parking.	1
More 20mph zones	1
Have outdoor events	1
Have less formal events	1
Have better cycle parking at Central Station	1
Grit cycle paths as well as roads, in winter	1
Follow up on space4cycling pledge	1
Focus on cycling in local areas, not just city centre	1
Focus more on engaging people who do not cycle very much	1
Engage with stakeholders to get things right first time when improving the infrastructure	1
Create safe, continuous cycle lanes to encourage children to cycle	1
Council has taken a good approach to encourage cycling	1
Better training for cyclists	1
A better web site	1
Total no. of people who commented*	30

* Some people’s comments contained several themes, so the numbers of comments on themes may total more than 30.

Comments included:

“I feel that the forum and stakeholder group should use online technology such as Let’s talk Newcastle online to hold longer-term discussions over points that would normally be discussed just at the meetings. This would allow individuals who cannot attend the meetings to have meaningful input, which could be fed on to decision makers.”

“I have not lived in Newcastle long but have cycled around somewhat. There needs to be a commitment from the council to spend all the allocated funds, develop cycle routes through the city, and engage with the groups we are talking about to get things right first time.”

About the people in the survey

1. Gender

Gender	N
Male	17
Female	7
Total	24
<i>Missing</i>	8
Total	32

Most people in the survey were male.

2. Employment status

Employment status	N
Employed full-time	19
Employed part-time	3
Retired	5
Total	27
<i>Missing</i>	5
Total	32

The majority of people in the survey were employed full-time (19 out of 32).

3. Age

Age	N
Under 18	1
18-29	0
30-44	4
45-60	9
61-75	4
Total	18
<i>Missing</i>	<i>14</i>
Total	32

The biggest age group in the survey was people aged between 45-60.

4. Ethnicity

Ethnic group	N
White British	22
Other White	1
Prefer not to say	4
Total	27
<i>Missing</i>	<i>5</i>
Total	32

The majority of people in the survey were White British (22 out of 32).