

3. The Sustainable Travel Towns

3.1 Background to the Sustainable Travel Towns project

In 2003 the Department for Transport invited expressions of interest from local authorities across England wishing to establish a sustainable travel demonstration town. The aim of the project was to demonstrate the effect of a sustained package of smart measures, applied over a five-year period in a comprehensive, intensive and strategic way, together with complementary infrastructure.

More than 50 local authorities bid to take part in the initiative. Selection criteria included the quality of their proposals, their plans for monitoring, the support of partner organisations, value for money and the local authority's commitment, ability and expertise in relation to smart measures.

Three towns – Darlington, Peterborough and Worcester – were chosen to become Sustainable Travel Towns. Between them they were awarded a total of £10 million in revenue funding to be spent over the five years of the programme from 2004/5-2008/9. Complementary infrastructure improvements were to be funded through the authorities' Local Transport Plans (LTPs).

At an early stage in the programme, in Autumn 2004, travel behaviour information was collected from more than 12,000 people across the three towns, to provide baseline data for future monitoring of the initiatives' impacts.

Our interviews with officers in the three towns took place towards the end of the Sustainable Travel Town period, between May and June in 2008¹, at a time when the towns were nearing completion of their programmes and considering the potential for future work on smart measures.

3.2 Overview of the three towns

3.2.1 Darlington

Darlington Borough Council, a unitary authority located in the Tees Valley sub-region, comprises 85% countryside and a small historic market town. The Smarter Choice Programme, initially entitled *Town on the move* and later re-branded *Local Motion*, was confined to the urban area, accounting for 20 of the 24 wards in the borough and housing 90% of a total population of just under 100,000.

With a relatively compact urban area, Darlington emerged from the baseline survey as having the greatest potential for travel behaviour change amongst the three towns because of the high proportion of short journeys made by its residents and travel patterns that appeared conducive to sustainable travel interventions. Darlington has

¹ But with further meetings with public transport operators in Autumn 2008, and extensive follow-up correspondence by email with all the towns over the period June – December 2008.

lower than average levels of car ownership (with 69% of households owning a car) and relatively high levels of bus patronage.

Over the past decade, Darlington's population has remained relatively constant. There has been relatively little new housing, with most residential developments being small infill and redevelopment. The most significant housing development has been several hundred houses in the North-West in West Park.

About three-quarters of the working population have jobs based in Darlington, 80% of which are in the service sector. At the time of our interviews, unemployment was above the national average, but below the regional level. In contrast, average wage levels were low, even when compared with other locations in the region. Through the borough's 'Gateway Strategy' for economic regeneration, public funds had been used to attract interest from private employers. This had led to a number of high profile developments such as Argos and a business park at Lingfield Point, where a number of Government agencies were planning to move, including some that were new to the town. Darlington Further Education College had also relocated from one side of the town centre to the other. For employment development, the borough had a trend towards de-centralisation with a continuing shift in emphasis from the established urban area and town centre to larger employment areas towards the outskirts of the town. However, the Gateway Strategy was under review, and officers were looking to reflect the aim of focusing development into accessible and central locations.

There had been no major new retail developments and in 2006 a planning application from Tesco to develop a large town centre store had been rejected.

In 2005 Darlington had also been selected as one of six Cycling Demonstration Towns by Cycling England. This had injected an additional £1.5 million external funding into the town, largely for cycle infrastructure improvements. These comprised seven radial routes linking into and through the town centre, scheduled to be completed by March 2009. Darlington is the only town to have both Sustainable Travel Town and Cycling Demonstration Town status.

3.2.2 Peterborough

Peterborough City Council, a unitary authority, covers both a built-up area and a small rural hinterland. The town was designated as a 'New Town' in 1968, and a masterplan drawn up to double the city's population, with the growth concentrated in four residential 'townships'. By 2008 the last of these, Hampton, was being built to the south of the city, and the location for further expansion had been the subject of recent discussion. An Integrated Growth Strategy was being developed for the city and its hinterland, as one of the Government's four Housing Growth Areas (London, Stansted, Cambridge and Peterborough) and various options for new housing were under consideration. The preferred option was for 20,650 new homes in the period to 2026. This included new residential development in the city centre and in district and local centres within the existing urban area, and two extensions to the urban area, as well as more limited development in the villages around the city.

The council's Smarter Choice Programme – branded as *Travelchoice* – focussed on the urban area, with a population of 140,540. Population growth was anticipated with

completion of the housing at Hampton, and, beyond that, as the new development proposed in the Integrated Growth Strategy took shape over the period to 2026.

As a result of the New Town designation there has been heavy investment in Peterborough's road network, including the development of a network of 'parkway' dual carriageways. The city also has a large network of off-road cycle paths. Car ownership levels reflect the average for England, with around 74% of households owning a car.

Peterborough has a significant population of people for whom English is a second language – especially recent migrants from Eastern European countries and people born in Asia (particularly Pakistan). Altogether, more than 50 languages are spoken in the city. In practice, it was not feasible to translate *Travelchoice* materials into so many languages, although at one stage the *Travelchoice* team produced an information sheet in the main community languages to explain their personal travel planning initiative.

One other feature of the town is large flows of commuters travelling to London by train. Consequently, the promotion of car sharing to the station was included in the Smarter Choice Programme.

3.2.3 Worcester

In Worcester, the Sustainable Travel Town initiative – branded *Choose how you move* – was led by Worcestershire County Council. The geographical area covered by the Smarter Choice Programme was the City of Worcester, one of six local authority areas within the wider county. Although the city was the main focus for the programme, some promotional activity was expanded into other areas, for example, in Malvern, where many people travel to Worcester for employment. The city has above-average car ownership – census data show that, in 2001, 77% of households in Worcester had one or more cars/vans.

Worcester city centre lies between the River Severn to the west and the Worcester and Birmingham Canal to the east, both of which have adjacent walk and cycle ways. There are two railway stations, about 0.75km apart – Worcester Foregate Street and Worcester Shrub Hill. In accordance with the Regional Transport Strategy, there are plans for the development of a network of park-and-ride sites serving the city. In the first LTP period the city's first park-and-ride opened at Perdiswell, in the north of Worcester, with major improvements to services in September 2005 (i.e. early in the period of the Sustainable Travel Town initiative). There are also proposals for the construction of a third station – Worcestershire Parkway – in the second LTP period (2006-11), providing access from Junction 7 of the M5 Motorway, on the city's south-east edge.

The population of Worcester city wards, according to the 2001 census, was 93,353 (with 542,107 in the whole of Worcestershire). It is estimated that the city's population was 92,678 in mid-2004, and grew slightly in the course of the project to 93,655 in 2007.

In originally proposing Worcester as a demonstration town, the local authority argued that it was a very 'middle of the range' town, whose experience would be widely transferable to other areas. 'Worcester woman' has been used as a country average by election polling companies and the city's population demographics are considered 'very generic' in terms of age and prosperity.

Worcestershire generally has a small proportion of the population for whom English is a second language – in 2001 only 2.5% were from ethnic minority groups. Consequently Worcester's Smarter Choice Programme did not involve extensive translation of materials.

3.3 Motivation for engagement in the Sustainable Travel Towns programme

3.3.1 Benefits of being a Sustainable Travel Town

Asked about the benefits of being a Sustainable Travel Town, interviewees from all three authorities emphasised the value of the additional revenue funding they had received through the programme in allowing an expansion in smart measures that would not otherwise have been possible. In addition there were examples where the Department for Transport funding had assisted in levering in further funds for sustainable transport. In Darlington, for instance, officers said that participation in the programme had helped to secure the bus operator's investment in new vehicles, while in Worcester, the team recruited to implement the Smarter Choice Programme had helped to win funding for a new pedestrian and cycling bridge through the Sustrans *Connect 2* Lottery bid. In Peterborough, officers said the additional revenue funding had enabled them to use their LTP capital funds to greater effect, for example, by marketing bus services following the purchase of new vehicles.

Another important benefit of being a Sustainable Travel Town was the higher national profile afforded as a result of the programmes. This provided opportunities to participate in national conferences and attracted positive publicity at a national level.

In Darlington, interviewees especially valued their improved access to expertise as a national demonstration project, together with the resources to employ consultants on personal travel planning and marketing. They also considered that the initiative had vastly improved the quality of their data collection and generally 'raised the game' on monitoring. In particular, the household travel surveys had provided an evidence base that had helped in converting opinion inside and outside the council and in gaining support for further expenditure on smart measures.

In Worcester, it was felt that the project had helped to strengthen staff skills by bringing on board more 'people-focused' personnel who provided a valuable addition to the department, and were useful in other contexts such as consultation.

A further benefit cited in the case of Worcester was the ability to innovate and take risks that would not otherwise have been deemed acceptable, for example in pioneering a unique free cycle loan scheme across the city. Whilst this proved short lived in practice (with all 50 renovated hire bicycles disappearing within a short period) it had generated a great deal of publicity and interest, which the team considered worthwhile.

In addition, Worcester interviewees said the project had had the benefit of facilitating close ongoing cooperation between themselves (the county council) and Worcester City Council, for the implementation of a city-wide parking strategy. Consequently it had been

possible to set parking charges at city car parks, with a view to discouraging long-stay parking whilst prioritising short-stay parking in the interests of economic vibrancy.

3.3.2 Reasons for wanting to develop a large-scale Smarter Choice Programme

The towns saw their Smarter Choice Programmes as a means of tackling congestion and ensuring good accessibility, in the context of local circumstances. In Darlington, these priorities were linked to the need to ensure quality of life, and so attract high paid employment to the town as part of the town's Gateway Strategy for economic regeneration. There was also a need to ensure that such additional employment did not compromise accessibility or worsen congestion. Similarly in Peterborough, in the context of housing growth, an expansion in smart measures was seen as a way of ensuring that the town retained its relatively low congestion and good accessibility. In Worcester, where there was relatively high car use, an expansion in smart measures was considered to be a good means of tackling town centre congestion. Officers deemed the reallocation of road space towards more sustainable modes to be particularly problematic because of Worcester's old street layout, and argued that the voluntary nature of smart measures offered a good way forward. All three towns, in fact, reported that an emphasis on *voluntary* change made an expansion in smart measures politically attractive.

In Darlington, further impetus for the programme came from the need to address health inequalities: the town had a 13-year differential in life expectancy between its least and most affluent areas and the promotion of active travel was seen as a component in the strategy to reduce this gap. The borough also had a strong track record of working with the primary care trust, which was given representation on the reference group for the Smarter Choice Programme.

3.3.3 Degree of local authority priority and support given to the Sustainable Travel Town programme and smart measures

Interviewees were asked whether the promotion of smart measures was a high priority within their local authority compared with other areas of transport policy. All three programmes had been successful in attracting positive support from their authorities, but the picture was different in each case.

In Darlington, officers said support for the programme had shifted significantly during its implementation, from broad scepticism to broad support. This was thought to be the result of a number of positive factors: in particular, support grew in response to the good quality evidence that had accrued about the impacts of the programme, indicating the importance of data collection and the need to have a budget for this purpose. The authority had also welcomed the programme's emphasis on choice and voluntary behaviour change and the caution exercised in the tone of its campaign messages. Another key factor in building support had been the partnership working that underpinned the project, through a reference group which was independent of the local authority itself, and included a broad range of stakeholders – among them, teachers and representatives from community organisations, as well as local council members and officers. A further strength was the adoption of a strong brand (*Local Motion*) with advice from external marketing professionals. In addition, interviewees pointed to the capacity

of smart measures to tackle several political imperatives at once: congestion, quality of life, health, air quality and road safety. The kudos and profile that followed designation as a national demonstration project helped in positioning the council as ‘leading edge’, in line with its own aspirations. As well as earning broad political support and enthusiasm, the programme had generated interest in the potential to transfer its lessons to other areas of policy such as green behaviours and health promotion.

In Peterborough, interviewees said that support for smart measures in the local authority was ‘neither strong nor weak’, with some people very positive and others less so. While smart measures had initially been adopted as a means of minimising traffic growth and creating capacity for new housing, they were increasingly being seen as a strategy for tackling carbon emissions too, and this was a growing imperative in the light of Peterborough’s aspiration to become ‘Environment Capital’ – the greenest city in the UK². Elected members were described as ‘very supportive’ of the project, welcoming both the prestige attached to winning the funding through a competitive process, the programme’s emphasis on choice and the improvements in information and services that it brought to the public. However, interviewees added that support was much more mixed for complementary actions and measures that reduced car access, which were considered to be generally difficult. For example, a bus lane had been installed as a temporary traffic management measure during road works, and officers had hoped to retain it, but it had become a contentious political issue and subsequently been removed. Similarly, parking charges were regarded as politically ‘taboo’. Interviewees argued that the impact of any programme to encourage sustainable travel would necessarily be limited by the extent to which more difficult measures – such as reallocating some of the road network to buses and cycles – could be countenanced. They advised engaging with elected members at an early stage to explain the necessity for such measures as a complementary part of the programme.

In Worcester, the Smarter Choice Programme had enjoyed a generally supportive local authority environment. Interviewees said smart measures were consistently mentioned, and regarded by the Director of Environmental Services as ‘the only show in town’ for tackling traffic. The authority had been awarded beacon status for work on sustainability of which work on transport was a key aspect. The stream of positive publicity and kudos associated with the Sustainable Travel Town project was considered to be very helpful in gaining local political support for smart measures among elected members, some of whom were closely involved in the programme’s media strategy, for example, taking part in launches and supplying comments for press releases. Both county and city councillors were sent a project newsletter and invited to annual members’ seminars, which were well received. Although interviewees saw the Smarter Choice Programme as making it possible to encourage changes in travel behaviour without changing infrastructure, they also considered that it was helping to build stronger political support for some infrastructure work than might otherwise have been forthcoming: specifically, a bus priority scheme was under consultation at the time of the interview and politicians had been able to see the benefits of this in spite of some public dissent. The interviewees suggested that, to gain political support for smart measures, it was important to tap into existing political priorities, and to recruit team members with the confidence to approach

² ‘Environment Capital’ is a local initiative of the Greater Peterborough Partnership, with a manifesto which includes a target to reduce car driver mode share to 38% by 2016 and 34% by 2021; and a target for 41% of travel to be by sustainable modes in 2016, and 48% in 2021.

senior politicians in order to engage them in press and PR activities generated by the programme.

3.4 Public attitudes towards sustainable travel in the three towns

3.4.1 Findings from the baseline survey

The 2004 baseline surveys carried out by Socialdata & Sustrans examined attitudes to sustainable travel in the three towns. This part of the household survey involved face-to-face interviews conducted at home with a net sample of over 400 interviewees in each town. The overall response rate was 67% (Socialdata & Sustrans, 2005a). The main results from the baseline survey of attitudes were as follows:

Perceptions of traffic

The vast majority of residents in all towns (97% in Darlington; 89% in Peterborough and 93% in Worcester) thought car traffic had increased in the last few years and a large majority saw this as negative (94% in Darlington; 80% in Peterborough; 90% in Worcester).

Expectations of traffic growth

The majority also expected traffic to increase up to 2010 (82% in Darlington; 89% in Peterborough; 87% in Worcester).

Tolerance of traffic

Darlington residents appeared most widely perturbed by the consequences of car traffic and Peterborough residents the least so. In Darlington a slight majority (51%) said these consequences were either no longer bearable (22%) or not so bearable (29%). In Worcester 42% said these consequences were either no longer bearable (15%) or not so bearable (27%); whilst in Peterborough, only 30% found them either no longer bearable (11%) or not so bearable (19%).

Satisfaction with public transport

An index of satisfaction with public transport was created by comparing those satisfied and those dissatisfied. This was most positive in Darlington (+13) as compared to Peterborough's score of -6 and Worcester's score of -13. Similar indexes were developed for the evaluation of public transport services at the time of the survey as compared to four years earlier, with a fairly similar pattern of results (Darlington +7; Peterborough -6; Worcester -22).

Expectations for public transport

Looking ahead, residents were asked whether they expected services to improve in the next four years. Expectations, again indexed, were positive in both Darlington (+14) and Peterborough (+17) whilst in Worcester residents appeared to expect their already unsatisfactory services to become worse, with an index of -14.

Expectations about use of alternative modes

In all towns, a majority thought that public transport, cycling and walking would *not* increase, though this view was less prevalent for cycling (52% in Darlington; 57% in Peterborough; 57% in Worcester) than for public transport (72% in Darlington; 61% in Peterborough; 74% in Worcester) or walking (69% in Darlington; 81% in Peterborough; 70% in Worcester).

Perceptions of risk

In all three towns, cycling was more widely perceived to be dangerous than walking, with a majority saying that the risk of a traffic accident was ‘rather high’ though this view was a little less prevalent in Peterborough (69%) than in Darlington or Worcester (both 82%). With regards to walking, the percentage that thought the risk was rather high (53% in Darlington; 41% in Peterborough; 46% in Worcester) was fairly similar to that for those who thought the risk was rather low.

Support for policy measures

In all three towns, a large majority favoured making sustainable transport modes a priority in transport policy (Darlington 85%; Peterborough 94%; Worcester 91%). In general, there was least enthusiasm for putting tighter restrictions on parking with only around a third judging that this would be effective (32% in Darlington; 35% in both Peterborough and Worcester). Limiting car traffic was more widely thought to be effective in Peterborough (60%) than in Worcester (53%) or Darlington (48%). In all three towns, the strategy most widely judged to be effective was further developing public transport (76% in Darlington; 86% in Peterborough; 91% in Worcester) followed by developing bicycle routes (73% in Darlington; 82% in Peterborough; 85% in Worcester). Creating more pedestrian areas was thought to be effective by 64% in Darlington, 52% in Peterborough and 50% in Worcester.

Support for sustainable modes versus the car

The survey asked people whether they would support measures which favoured sustainable forms of travel – public transport, cycling and walking – even if they disadvantaged car users. In all three towns and for all three modes a large majority said they would, though support for this view was highest of all in Peterborough. This seems a little surprising given that Peterborough appeared better able to bear its current levels of traffic than the other two towns, though it could, perhaps, be a reflection of concern about the consequences of a future increase. Looking across the three towns, support was especially high in the case of measures favouring public transport over cars (Darlington 79%; Peterborough 94%; Worcester 87%) and walking over cars (Darlington 85%; Peterborough 93%; Worcester 90%) though there was also strong support for measures favouring cycling (Darlington 78%; Peterborough 88%; Worcester 85%).

Support for public transport versus road building

People were asked whether the public transport budget should be reduced in favour of road construction. Interestingly this met with overall disagreement in Peterborough (48% disagreed while 14% agreed) and in Worcester (43% disagreed while 18% agreed), but with marginally more agreement in Darlington (32% agreed and 30% disagreed). This could be partly because of a perception in the town of higher comparative spend on public transport. In all three towns however, around two-thirds of people agreed that politicians should be more committed to public transport (Darlington 64%; Peterborough 64%; Worcester 66%) with only 4-7% disagreeing.

3.4.2 Findings from other surveys

Residents' attitudes to sustainable travel were also examined in other surveys in Worcester and Peterborough. In Peterborough, the 2007 and 2008 Citizens' Panel surveys found that around half of residents would support a range of interventions to make it easier to travel around Peterborough, as summarised in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Results from Citizen's Panel surveys in Peterborough

	More/safer cycle routes	Improved public transport	Cheaper public transport	More/safer walking routes
July 2007	45%	54%	58%	44%
Spring 2008	49%	55%	66%	49%

These findings appear rather less supportive of sustainable travel interventions than those in the Socialdata & Sustrans baseline survey.

In Worcester, a face-to-face market research survey of Worcester residents (Ask for research/MRS, 2008) found 79% of respondents were positive about encouraging people to consider alternative forms of travel (sample base 149). The vast majority of residents (95%) could identify at least one benefit or opportunity of using sustainable travel, with over half of residents saying that getting fit/keeping healthy (60%), saving money (54%) and being positive for the environment (52%) were positive considerations for using sustainable travel (sample base 151).

3.5 The strategy adopted in each town

3.5.1 Overview of interventions in the three towns

The strategies adopted by the three towns were in many respects quite similar, and their key elements are outlined below.

Development of a strong 'brand identity'

Each town developed a brand name and identity, which linked together all elements of the programme: *Local Motion* in Darlington; *Travelchoice* in Peterborough; and *Choose how you move* in Worcester.

A large-scale personal travel planning programme

In Darlington this was delivered by consultants Steer Davies Gleave and targeted every household in the town. In Peterborough it was delivered by Socialdata & Sustrans and targeted every other household in every street in the city. In Worcester it was again delivered by Socialdata & Sustrans and targeted 60% of households, focussed in specific geographical areas of the city.

Travel awareness campaigns

All the towns engaged in a wide variety of activities, information and publicity to encourage people to travel more sustainably. In Darlington and Peterborough this included development of a sustainable travel 'club' or loyalty scheme (the *Local Motion* club and *Good Going*, respectively). Other elements of the travel awareness work included a regular stream of 'stories' to achieve publicity in the local media; use of billboards, banners, posters, newspaper and radio adverts and editorial in the council magazine; journey planner websites; special events and festivals; and production of a large number of information leaflets about various aspects of sustainable travel.

Cycling and walking promotion

This was a particularly strong element of the programme in Darlington (reflecting its status as a Cycling Demonstration Town). Particular aspects of the activity there included cycle promotion in schools; extensive child cycle training; and a large increase in cycle parking provision at schools and elsewhere, coupled with infrastructure measures to create a city centre 'pedestrian heart' and development of seven radial cycle routes. All three towns ran cycling 'festivals' in the summer months and programmes of family bicycle rides and guided walks. Darlington and Worcester operated bike loan schemes.

Public transport information and marketing

This had greater emphasis in Peterborough and Worcester than in Darlington. In Peterborough, the start of the Sustainable Travel Town project coincided with enhancement of the main city bus services by operator Stagecoach. This was coupled with improvements to information, including new real-time information screens, 'interchange posters' at bus stops, a *Travelchoice* information centre, and Text & Go bus departure information to mobile phones. In Worcester, the beginning of the Sustainable Travel Town work coincided with improvements to services funded via the Government's Urban Bus Challenge programme. Other changes included a colour-coded 'overground' system to simplify bus services (introduced by operator First); introduction of three 'express' bus services and a commuter bus service which were heavily marketed; fares initiatives and special ticketing deals; and ongoing marketing and publicity campaigns. Darlington struggled to promote bus services because two operators were competing in the town over much of the period of the Sustainable Travel Town project. This led to a reluctance to share information and reluctance to invest because of the likelihood of takeover. However, the council introduced some improvements including an area bus map, better information at bus stops, bus departure information to mobile phones and a multi-operator ticket. This issue was resolved by Summer 2008, when Arriva took over the Stagecoach services and the city bus network underwent a major reorganisation.

School travel planning

In all of the towns, by the end of the Sustainable Travel Town project, a high proportion of school pupils were covered by an active travel plan, or some school travel initiatives. Prior to 2004, the main focus of activity had been on developing highways infrastructure to make walking and cycling routes safer. However, introduction in 2004 of Government capital grants for schools with travel plans had the effect of shifting the focus of school travel work towards the development of formal travel plans for each school.

Workplace travel planning

All three towns sought to engage with businesses and other organisations to reduce car travel to work. In terms of the proportion of the potential target audience that was affected, this was less effective than the towns' school travel work, with between 11% and 12% of the workforce in the three towns being covered by a 'fully-fledged' workplace travel plan.

Car club

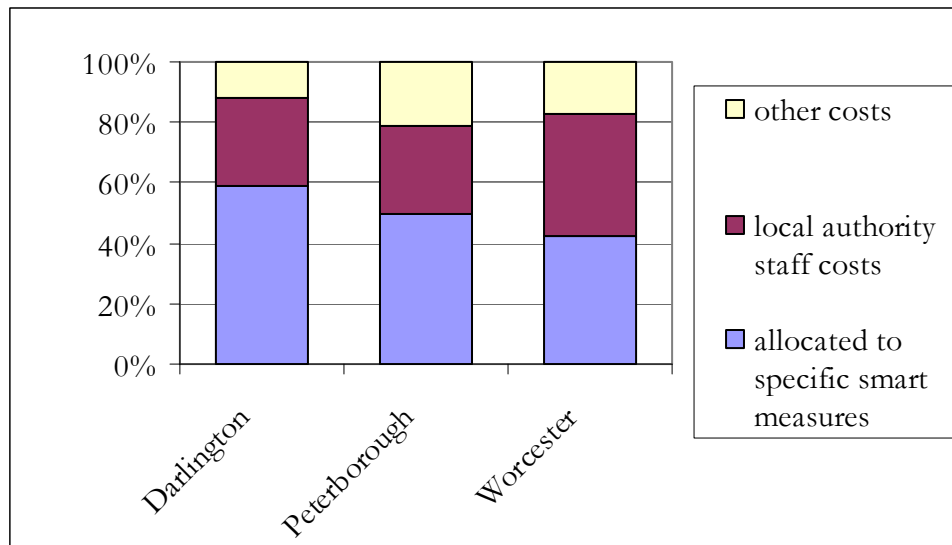
Only one of the towns, Worcester, embarked on the development of a car club as part of its programme. This was not successful, as the operator pulled out less than a year after it was established due to commercial restructuring of its business. At this point the car club vehicles were withdrawn from the town, and the authority decided to abandon the initiative.

In setting up the car club, officers had faced some teething difficulties. The first of these was in establishing car parking spaces for the cars, though these had been successfully negotiated with the city council by the time of the interview. Officers were also seeking to overcome a legal issue raised in relation to the authority's own use of the cars as corporate pool vehicles. In addition, the interviewee commented that Worcester's population typically had a fairly traditional outlook, which, together with high car ownership, made the car club concept more difficult to communicate. Nevertheless the scheme attracted positive press coverage. The authority had a target of 100 members in the first 18 months, and had attracted 20 members in the first five months of operation. Despite the slow initial progress, the officer anticipated that the involvement of one large employer would quickly create the necessary groundswell to get the scheme established.

3.5.2 Balance of investment in each smart measure

In order to understand the relative levels of investment in the different smart measures, we asked the three towns to provide financial information to show how their investment had been allocated in each year from 2004/5 to 2008/9 (with 'actuals' for the first four years, and budgeted figures for the final year). So far as possible, we attempted to standardise the headings to which costs were allocated. However, the towns themselves used a variety of headings for budgetary purposes, and translating these headings into the standardised ones suggested by us was not always straightforward. The resulting figures should therefore be regarded as 'best estimates'.

Over the course of the five-year programme, the revenue expenditure attributed to the Smarter Choice Programme by officers in the towns was £3.2 million in Darlington, £3.6 million in Peterborough and £2.8 million in Worcester. Of this, approximately 40-60% was related to implementation of the smart measures described in section 3.5.1; 30-40% was related to local authority staff costs in managing and delivering the programme; and 10-20% was for a variety of other costs including monitoring, travel behaviour research, training, accommodation, general media work and traffic management support. The distribution of the revenue expenditure between these three main headings is illustrated in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Revenue expenditure between 2004/5 and 2008/9

Note: Some of the funding allocated to specific smart measures would have included staff costs outside the local authority – for example, personal travel advisers employed via consultancies to visit households as part of the personal travel planning work.

In addition, there were substantial amounts of capital expenditure that could be considered to be supportive of the Smarter Choice Programme. It was not possible to gather a complete picture of the capital investment that could have contributed to encouraging a shift towards sustainable modes of travel. However, discussion and email dialogue with officers in the three towns, together with examination of relevant documents, enabled the research team to identify a number of capital investments that were likely to have supported modal shift.

In Darlington, this included approximately £460,000 capital investment in relation to school infrastructure schemes (including cycle parking); £70,000 for bus improvements including electronic display boards; £1.2 million for cycle infrastructure schemes and £75,000 for monitoring, including cycle counters. However, over the period of the Sustainable Travel Town work there were also other investments in Darlington – for example in design and construction of the new city centre pedestrian area – that could be considered to be supportive to the Smarter Choice Programme.

In Peterborough, the capital investment included expenditure in relation to school travel infrastructure (£1.3 million); public transport information (about £800,000); other public transport infrastructure (about £3.0 million); and cycling and walking infrastructure (about £490,000).

In Worcester, the capital investment included approximately £530,000 in relation to school travel infrastructure; public transport information (about £82,000); other public transport infrastructure (about £2.3 million); and cycling and walking infrastructure (about £2.6 million, of which somewhat over half was for improvements to Worcester High Street).

Table 3.2 summarises the research team's estimates of the capital and revenue expenditure that contributed directly to delivery of the six main smarter choice measures in the three towns. The figures presented in this table include all identifiable capital

expenditure that might be expected to have contributed towards modal shift. They exclude spending on monitoring and research and the abortive spending on the Worcester car club. Finally, actual expenditures on salaries (which not all the towns were able to disaggregate between smart measures) were not used, and instead we derived figures based on month-by-month staffing levels and average staff salaries for each post directly related to delivery of smart measures, excluding staff salaries for management. The programme expenditure in Table 3.2 is disaggregated for each of the individual smart measures in chapters 4-9.

Table 3.2: Summary of estimated expenditure directly related to delivery of main smarter choice measures in the three towns, 2004/5 to 2008/9

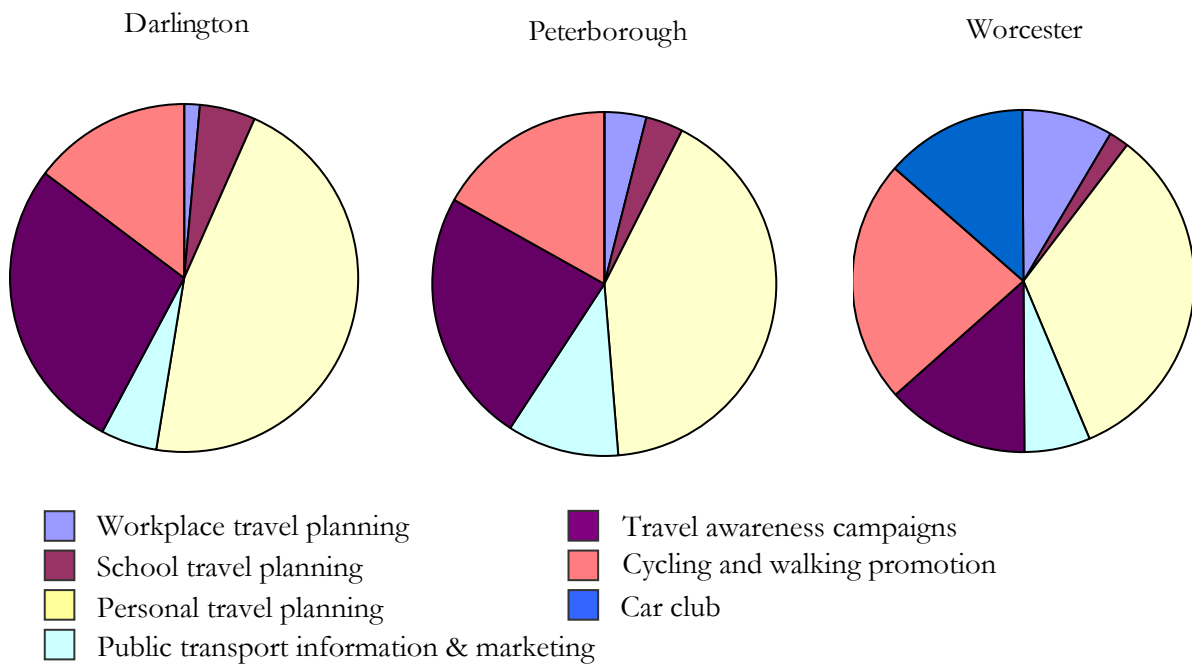
	Darlington	Peterborough	Worcester	All towns
Revenue	£2,632,000	£2,642,000	£1,552,000	£6,826,000
Capital	£1,745,000	£4,160,000	£2,860,000	£8,765,000
Total	£4,376,000	£6,803,000	£4,411,000	£15,590,000

Note: Revenue expenditure includes non-staff costs and estimated staff costs that are directly attributable to the main smarter choice measures. Staff costs for management are not included. Figures may not add exactly due to rounding.

Looking just at the revenue expenditure that can be identified as having been spent on specific smart measures, the highest proportion in every town (33%-46%) was spent on personal travel planning. The next largest expenditure categories were travel awareness campaigns (14%-28%) and cycling and walking promotion (15%-23%), followed by public transport information and marketing (5%-11%). Revenue spending on workplace travel planning and school travel planning was much less, at 1%-9% and 2%-5% respectively. The relative spending on each of the smart measures is illustrated in Figure 3.2.

It should be noted that these figures are not necessarily a fair reflection of the amount of 'effort' allocated to measures such as workplace travel planning, which required significant amounts of local authority staff time. Although it was not possible to break down the total figure for local authority staff costs into amounts for each individual measure, we were able to estimate the proportion of local authority staff costs allocated to workplace travel planning and personal travel planning. If these estimated staff costs are taken into account, revenue expenditure on workplace travel planning increases slightly to about 4-10% of costs³, while revenue expenditure on personal travel planning falls to about 19-32% of costs.

³ The percentage quoted here is for revenue allocated to specific smart measures plus local authority staff costs, and does not include 'other' costs.

Figure 3.2: Proportion of revenue allocated to each individual smart measure

Note: Proportions only take account of expenditure that could be directly allocated to a specific smart measure, and therefore exclude local authority staff costs and 'other' costs

3.5.3 Overview of staffing for smart measures programme

Before the start of the Sustainable Travel Town programme in April 2004, the towns had relatively few staff engaged on smarter choices initiatives. In Darlington, there were 1.8 full-time equivalent (fte) staff posts dedicated to what might broadly be termed smarter choices work, of which 1 fte-post was engaged in cycling and walking promotion and the rest of the time was split between public transport information and marketing and initiatives related to school and workplace travel. In Peterborough, the time allocated to smarter choices initiatives was slightly greater at 3.25 fte-posts, again related to public transport information and marketing, school travel work (which was the most significant element) and workplace travel planning. In Worcester, there were 1.3 fte-posts engaged in smarter choices work, mainly in relation to cycling and walking promotion and school travel planning (see Table 3.3).

Recruitment of staff at the beginning of the project took at least six months, and in some cases up to a year, such that the full complement of officers was not in post until some time after the formal project start-date. Once the Sustainable Travel Town project was fully underway, the total number of staff engaged in various aspects of the programme was about 6-7 for most of the time in Darlington and Worcester, and somewhat more than this (rising to a maximum of 10 fte-posts) in Peterborough.

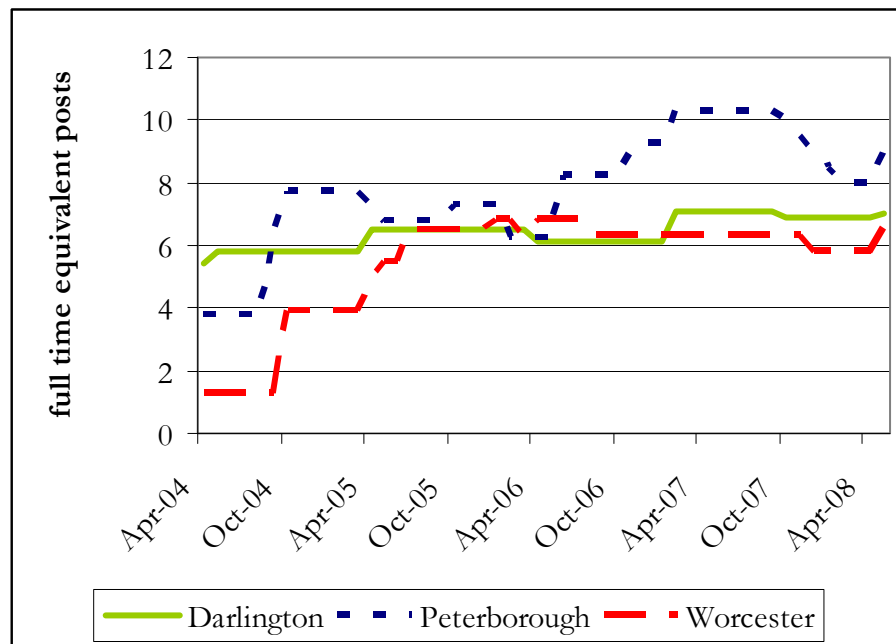
In two of the three towns, Peterborough and Worcester, there were a lot of changes in both the overall number of people working on the smart measures programme, and the individual personnel, during the course of the project. Darlington, by contrast, had rather stable staffing levels and little staff turnover.

At the time of our interviews, in May 2008, the staff time allocated to the Smarter Choice Programme was 7.05 fte-posts in Darlington, 9 (but shortly to rise to 10) in Peterborough, and 6.6 in Worcester.

Table 3.3: Total staff time (fte-posts) allocated to the Smarter Choice Programme

	Darlington	Peterborough	Worcester
Before April 2004	1.8	3.25	1.3
May 2008	7.05	9	6.6

Figure 3.3: Changes in staff time allocated to the Smarter Choice Programme (fte-posts)



Note: This graph, and the equivalent graphs in Chapters 4-9, give the impression that Darlington achieved its full complement of staff almost immediately after the start of the Sustainable Travel Town programme. This was probably not the case, and is a consequence of the way in which Darlington officers reported their staffing levels to the research team, in averages for each year of the programme, rather than with actual start dates for each member of staff.

Typically, the amount of staff time that was devoted to individual smart measures during periods of full engagement was: workplace travel planning 0.5-2 fte posts; school travel planning 1-2 fte posts; personal travel planning 0.5-1 fte posts; public transport information and marketing 0.5-3 fte posts; cycling and walking promotion 0.5-1.5 fte posts; travel awareness campaigns 0.5-1 fte posts.

There were clear differences between the towns in the total amount of staff time allocated to each smart measure, and these are illustrated by Table 3.4. Notably, Peterborough invested more staff time than either of the other towns in public transport information and marketing, and Darlington invested more time in cycling and walking promotion. As we will see later, this correlates well with the outcomes that were achieved.

Table 3.4: Summary of average local authority staff time p.a. (full-time equivalent posts) dedicated to the different smart measures, April 2004 to May 2008

	Darlington	Peterborough	Worcester	Average for all towns
Workplace travel planning	0.5	1.5	0.7	0.9
School travel planning	1.6	1.6	0.7	1.3
Personal travel planning	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.3
Public transport information and marketing	0.5	2.1	0.4	1.0
Cycling and walking promotion	1.5	0.5	0.6	0.9
Travel awareness	0.9	1.1	0.5	0.8
Car club	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0
Management	1.1	0.7	2.0	1.3
Total	6.4	7.8	5.4	6.5

Note: figures represent annual average full-time equivalent staff in post over the four years from April 2004 to May 2008, based on monthly staffing level information. This provides a measure of the actual time dedicated to delivery of each element of the programme. Note that the resulting figures are somewhat lower than the staff posts once recruitment was complete, because they are averaged over the entire period from the start of the project. Figures for 'management' include staff time spent on internal communications and project management for monitoring and evaluation.

3.5.4 Factors influencing ease of delivery of the programme

Interviewees identified several features of their towns that had made the Smarter Choice Programme easier to implement. These were as follows:

- A compact and relatively self-contained urban area, with many residents 'working and playing' in the town (Darlington);
- The fact that the city was in a state of growth (in terms of both new residents and new businesses), with new arrivals perhaps easier to influence (Peterborough);
- The fact that the city had more people commuting in than commuting out (Worcester);
- The existence of a good bus network (Darlington); recent improvements in the bus network (Peterborough); and only one main bus operator, which made negotiations easier (Worcester);
- A relatively flat topography and dry climate, which favoured cycling (Darlington); and a good physical infrastructure for walking and cycling (Peterborough);
- A strong 'community spirit' and existing strong partnerships, for example, with the health and education sectors and with the bus operator (Darlington and Peterborough);
- A congested city centre (Worcester).

However, it was not the case that the towns 'had everything going for them' in seeking to change people's travel behaviour. Officers in the three towns identified a number of challenges that they had had to overcome in order to develop a successful Smarter Choice Programme, as outlined below.

Securing political support

There was scepticism from members and senior officers, and a feeling that some smart measures were 'frivolous' and that the reported level of behaviour change was not credible (Darlington). This was overcome by emphasising the high quality of the data that was being collected and recruiting an independent auditor to assess the household travel survey reports.

Staffing issues

This included the fact that it took some time to recruit a staff team (Darlington and Peterborough); that there was a limited pool of people to choose from during recruitment, making it difficult to find staff with the appropriate skills and experience (Darlington and Peterborough); that there was significant staff turnover during the course of the project (Peterborough and Worcester); and that staff employed on fixed term contracts tended to leave about a year before the end of the project, due to uncertainty about future funding (Peterborough and Worcester).

Management issues

In Worcester, there was internal debate about where the programme should be located before it was placed in the passenger transport unit.

Monitoring and data collection

It took longer than expected to set up the contract for the baseline household travel survey (Darlington and Worcester); and officers considered it would have been useful to have had more advice on monitoring from the Department for Transport (Worcester).

Building partnerships with public transport operators

In Worcester, it took some time for council officers to build an effective partnership with the public transport operator, and high fares in the initial stages of the project made it more difficult to persuade people to use bus services. In Darlington, there was competition between two bus operators, leading to a service that was fragmented and more difficult to promote.

Marketing strategy

In Darlington, a weak initial brand led to negative media coverage. This was overcome by bringing in a commercial marketing consultancy. In Peterborough, centralisation of the marketing function within the council reduced the autonomy of the *Travelchoice* team to deliver some initiatives.

Delivery of innovative schemes

In Peterborough, officers said staff with IT expertise would have made it easier to deliver some of the projects that were innovative in terms of technology. In Worcester, there were difficulties over delivery of the car club, both in relation to defining the respective roles of the operator and the council, and in overcoming legal barriers.

Over-supply of road capacity

In Peterborough, there was little congestion and very easy car access, and a sense of pride at the high levels of car accessibility in the city. This made it more difficult to persuade people that there was a need to change their travel patterns.

Disruption to bus services

A major town centre pedestrianisation works in Darlington between Autumn 2005 and July 2007 resulted in substantial roadworks and upheaval of bus routes, which made it more difficult to attract people onto public transport.

3.5.5 Media and communications strategy

All three towns emphasised the importance of having a strong 'brand'. In Darlington, the initial brand of *Town on the Move* had been unhelpful, and on a few occasions the media had actively undermined the campaign, using the caption 'town *not* on the move'. Subsequently, the *Local Motion* brand had been much more successful. In Peterborough, the *Travelchoice* brand was felt to have been an important influence on the way that the various initiatives were received, giving a consistent message, so that a link was created between different initiatives. The emphasis on 'choice' was seen as helpful, avoiding the risk of being seen as 'anti-car'. In Worcester, market research had informed development of the brand. It found that people were sensitive to any sense of compulsion and suspicious of an 'anti-car' agenda, with low trust for 'government' initiatives. They were more receptive to messages based on benefits than drawbacks and had a general preference for 'towards' rather than 'away from' messaging.

The towns all had a systematic programme of press-releasing 'good news' stories on a regular basis to generate media coverage. These were sometimes piggy-backed on national events (such as European Mobility Week) and sometimes highlighted an event or new service or initiative. For example, in Peterborough, there were between two and 17 press releases in each quarter between January 2005 and June 2008. Media coverage of the Smarter Choice Programmes in the three towns was almost always positive. In Worcester, the county assessed that the positive media coverage over the 11 months to March 2008 had been worth over £266,000 (based on the equivalent cost of placing paid-for advertising in newspapers).

The experience of the towns suggested some key lessons regarding media and communications:

- It may be appropriate to downplay the role of the council (e.g. not including the council logo on some materials aimed at the general public) in order to win support and avoid the council being accused of 'telling people what to do' (Darlington).
- Literature and press releases should always emphasise choice and the benefits of sustainable travel (such as those related to health, relaxation and sociability) and avoid any impression of being 'anti-car' (Darlington and Worcester).
- The most effective materials show 'ordinary' people and local images, with simple direct messages and a light-hearted fun approach (Worcester).

3.6 Plans for the future

At the time of the interview, proposals and funding for future Smarter Choice Programmes in the three towns were still being finalised. Both Darlington and Peterborough had earmarked sums for these future programmes, but there remained considerable uncertainty, especially in Worcester. Nevertheless, all three towns were hoping to continue their programmes at a similar level of intensity beyond 2009, with the exception of work on personal travel planning which they did not expect to repeat in its original form. This was partly because this initiative was seen as having already been completed, though some interviewees suggested that it would have been worthwhile to re-run a similar exercise, had the funding been available. In all three towns however, officers were considering ways of incorporating the principles and techniques used in personal travel planning in their future work. All three towns also had plans to extend the geographical remit of their Smarter Choice Programmes to include the surrounding rural areas.

3.6.1. Darlington

In Darlington, while neither a final set of new initiatives or the level of funding had been determined, the Corporate Management Team was considering the option of a more comprehensive package of measures, and the potential to extend the scope of the programme to meet corporate objectives around health and climate change.

There were plans to continue the full range of activities (personal travel planning excepted), but to place new or greater emphasis on a variety of areas. These included workplace travel plans, area-wide travel plans for business parks and residential travel plans. Officers intended to particularly target new centres of employment within the borough, using Section 106 agreements to secure funding for travel plan measures as a pre-requisite of planning permission at new worksites or extensions to existing worksites over a set size. There were also plans to further develop Darlington's *Local Motion* club, making it more interactive rather than merely a vehicle for providing information, and to use the project's *Local Motion* travel advisers to deliver a variety of initiatives, including those targeted at employers. Officers proposed to promote bus services in cooperation with Arriva, including targeted promotion of the new network, introduced in Summer 2008. Whilst discontinuing the existing programme of personal travel planning, there was an interest in using community based social marketing activity around health promotion issues and in targeting residents with sustainable travel information at times of transition, such as moving into a new home. Officers were also looking to target different types of trip – for example, car journeys into Darlington from outside the town, which could be reduced through car sharing, and trips with different purposes such as leisure and shopping.

At the time of the interview, the authority was seeking funding in the region of £400,000 for continued support of the programme. This included £120,000 each year of LTP funding and £80,000 each year through road safety grant, the latter specifically for cycle and pedestrian training. The authority had also made bids for another £170,000 a year (through Cycling England) and £45,000 per year in European Regional Development Funding, made available through a trans-national EU Interreg NWE funded project.

It was expected that, beyond 2009, *Local Motion* would be embedded as part of the Sustainable Community Strategy, which included: ‘*continuing the focus of the Local Motion programme on marketing the alternative modes of transport and seeking to reduce vehicle use and emissions ... so that Darlington becomes more like some places in continental Europe where affluence is not synonymous with increased car use*’ (Darlington Partnership, 2008).

3.6.2 Peterborough

In Peterborough, officers planned that beyond 2009 they would extend the *Travelchoice* programme to cover the town’s rural hinterland as well as the urban areas where the first phase of work had taken place. They also intended to focus particularly on interventions designed to reduce carbon emissions. In addition, on the basis that they felt the workplace and school travel planning were now established and progressing well, they wanted to branch out into new areas of work.

With the extension of *Travelchoice* to the rural area, car sharing was expected to become more significant, having previously been only a small element of the programme. Interviewees were also interested in developing residential travel planning, especially in the light of the city’s proposed expansion. Officers envisaged that residential travel plans would initially be resourced from within the council, but expected that, in time, it would be possible to use Section 106 developer contributions for this purpose. Potential components for such travel plans included personal travel planning (with, for example, residents’ offers of cycle discounts and taster tickets for bus travel) and, possibly, site-specific websites for new housing developments.

Expansion into areas of new technology was also under discussion. For example, one option being considered was the promotion of home shopping. Another, which would link into the growing desire to cut carbon emissions, was to look at ways of encouraging people to use low carbon or electric vehicles, through electric re-charging points in car parks and price incentives, i.e. reward schemes or preferential lower charges for greener vehicles.

Looking more broadly at initiatives to encourage sustainable travel, there was an interest in interventions that would improve journey reliability and public transport information. Peterborough had not had an urban traffic control system in the past and it was hoped that the introduction of this would enable the creation of ‘virtual’ bus lanes by giving buses priority at traffic signals. Officers were also looking at linking real-time information with an existing Text & Go service, so that people would receive information on the ‘real’ arrival time of the next bus at their bus stop, as opposed to the scheduled arrival time. Finally, the council was looking at options for a city centre Low Emission Zone for buses.

Revenue funding of £460,000 and capital funding of £535,000 had been earmarked for *Travelchoice* for 2009/10. This was a similar level of funding to 2008/9 but lower than the peak spend in the middle years of the programme. These were baseline figures, and in principle there was the possibility of developing a bid for further revenue for *Travelchoice*, which would be considered against all other pressures on council funds. The final decision on the *Travelchoice* budget was scheduled for February 2009.

3.6.3 Worcester

Interviewees said that Worcestershire County Council was committed to embedding smart measures into the organisation's culture and budget and that in future they planned to extend the existing programme to the whole county, but that this is was dependent on funding. Because personal travel planning had been cost-heavy, it was expected that this element of the programme would be greatly modified. Officers were hoping to draw on the principles of the initiative to deliver a much less intensive version of it, developed on an in-house basis – for example, having an order form available and promoting this through targeted mail drops and the Worcestershire Hub (a customer services portal). They were also considering the scope for extending these techniques to other areas of environmental behaviour within the council's remit. Other than this, personal travel planning was only expected to take place where developer funding was available to support it, secured through Section 106 payments for new residential developments. It was intended that all other strands of the Smarter Choice Programme would be continued, with a greater emphasis on the use of developer funding for travel planning.

At the time of the interview, officers within the county's Safe and Sustainable Travel Unit were seeking agreement from the senior management team that money for future smart measures could be drawn from funding for the LTP. This was being justified on the grounds that it made the LTP's capital investment more worthwhile and was consequently thought likely to change the focus of the scheme somewhat towards the support of capital projects. In general, however, officers pointed out that the main costs of the initiatives were incurred through their development, so that rolling projects out to reach a wider audience would be a relatively low cost addition. They were also looking at the potential for using Section 106 money to pay for smart measures.

3.7 References

Ask for research & MRS (2008) *Worcestershire County Council Safe & Sustainable Travel Survey, Volume 1*

Darlington Partnership (2008) *One Darlington: perfectly placed: A vision for Darlington: 2008-2021* Available at:
http://www.darlington.gov.uk/dar_public/documents/ConnectingWithCommunities/25894%20Community%20Strategy%20FINAL.pdf

Socialdata & Sustrans (2005a) *Travel Behaviour Research Survey 2004: Sustainable Travel Demonstration Towns*

Socialdata & Sustrans (2005b) *Darlington: Sustainable Travel Demonstration Town Travel Behaviour Research Baseline Survey 2004* Report for Darlington Borough Council.

Socialdata & Sustrans (2005c) *Peterborough: Sustainable Travel Demonstration Town Travel Behaviour Research Baseline Survey 2004* Report for Peterborough City Council

Socialdata & Sustrans (2005d) *Worcester: Sustainable Travel Demonstration Town Travel Behaviour Research Baseline Survey 2004* Report for Worcestershire County Council